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History and Literature:
**Recuperation, Renovation and Diversity of the Historical Novel in
Democratic Spain (1980-1995)**

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Democratic Spain (1980-1995)

by

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My investigation will focus on the work of Lourdes Ortiz, Ángeles de Irisarri, Manuel Villar Raso and Antonio Gala. With the use of intellectual foundations of a critical historicism within a didactic and historical narrative, these writers recover for the reader a new vision of the formation of Spain characterized by social diversity. Their works refute the assumed genuine function of hegemonic power, the historical stability of the past and the implicit homogeneous idiosyncrasy of our cultural traditions. They confront and question the idea of cultural and ethnic homogeneity. Ortiz's Urraca (1982) and Irisarri's Doña Toda, reina de Navarra (1991) reappraise cultural structures and power relationships through the reexamination of the role of women in history, politics

and society. Due to the control of the narrative, female characters are independent subjects; a self-assured force against the establishment. Villar Raso's Las Españas perdidas (1984) and Gala's El manuscrito carmesí (1990) explore the fall of Granada in 1492 and the expulsion of the last Hispanic-Arabs in 1609 through Diego/Yuder's and King Boabdil's personal testimony and memory. Both novels defy the official discourse, offering a decentralized, highly emotional and alternative vision of the past events. The poetic of historical novel will allow me to discuss the dynamic between history and literature and the techniques used to rewrite history. Critics such as George Lukács, Amado Alonso and Cristina Fernández study the different elements that characterize the historical novel. For instance, Lukács emphasizes in the concept of necessary anachronism, which allow writers to present characters with a historical consciousness capable to express ideas about the narrated events. Postmodern, postcolonial and gender theories will allow me to examine ethnic, ethnic and power relationships through history. The theoretical approach of intellectuals such as Ibn Hassan, J. F. Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva and Linda Hutcheon, will assist me in the questioning of the legitimacy of political and cultural institutions and the mythical features of canonical narratives.

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INTRODUCTION

Distinctive narrative subgenres characterize the literary landscape of the democratic Spain that emerged 1980. One creative variant that rises above the rest is the historical novel. Its revisionist possibilities allow literature to evaluate the quintessence of the established perspective of the country's formation. Due to postmodern, poststructural, postcolonial critical theories and gender studies, the historical novel is transformed into the "*Nueva Novela Histórica*." Thanks to the peculiarities that characterize it, I think it is pertinent to call it "*Nueva Novela Histórica*." The essence of "*Nueva Novela Histórica*" questions the concept of nation and re-evaluates both our past and our present. It refutes the assumed function of hegemonic power and the implicit homogeneous idiosyncrasy of our cultural traditions. The "*Nueva Novela Histórica*" validates peripheral voices and deconstructs the mythical features of canonical narratives and History. It offers a more heterogeneous and apologetic image of the historically subaltern sectors of society and a less centralized vision of past events.

The objective of this study is to explore and investigate the literary complexity of the "*Nueva Novela Histórica*" with the analysis of Lourdes Ortiz's Urraca (1982), Angeles de Irisarri's Doña Toda, reina de Navarra (1991), Manuel Villar Raso's Las Españas perdidas (1984) and Antonio Gala's El manuscrito carmesí (1990). I will explain how these novels recuperate marginal positions of society, invert the hierarchical order and vindicate a forgotten vision of the construction of history. I will observe how these novels challenge the official

logocentric discourse with alternative and diverse interpretations. By examining gender conflicts, power relationships and ethnic and ethical issues, I will demonstrate the presence of a critical methodology within these historical novels that allows the writers to reevaluate apparent literary, historical and social stability. I will argue that we can no longer see society and the past as simple reflections of a unique homogeneous discourse. Nor can we accept the imposed legitimacy of its ideology and cultural institutions. I thus will display the different means these novelists employ in order to rewrite and portray specific events and actions that affected the evolution of the concept of the nation through the centuries.

With the use of the intellectual foundations of a critical historicism within a didactic and historical narrative, our writers seek to recover for the reader a new vision of the formation of Spain characterized by social diversity. They confront and question the idea of cultural and ethnic homogeneity and the possession of an absolute historical truth.

In the analysis of Urraca and Toda, reina de Navarra, I focus on the literary relevance of the main characters of these two novels: the medieval queens Urraca of Castile and Toda Aznár of Navarre. These narratives reappraise cultural structures and power relationships through the reexamination of the role of women in history, politics and society.

Urraca, the first Castilian queen, achieves self-preservation through the control of the power of writing. In the course of her story, she speaks to the reader about the development of her subjectivity, the private and public circumstances that surround her reign and her importance in the construction of Castile as a

powerful kingdom. Toda is the confirmation of absolute power and authority. Gender conflicts, her past and present, and the destiny of her kingdom confirm her importance in society and validate her existence as a model for future women. These female characters appear as literary referents that dominate the narration and possess the capability to create a conscious feminine subject. Women are no longer peripheral individuals; rather, their activism challenges history and literature by taking and controlling the center stage.

Las Españas perdidas and El manuscrito carmesí portray two of the most significant events in Spain's history: the fall of Granada in 1492 and the expulsion of the "Moriscos", the last Hispanic-Arabs, in 1609. Both works explore ethical, ethnic and religious conflicts of the past through the memory and the personal testimony of their main characters: The Morisco Diego/Yuder and King Boabdil. With the use of the emerging voice of the "moro" and the "morisco", these writers defy the official discourse, offering a decentralized, highly emotional and alternative vision of history.

Diego/Yuder presents a world of violence and intolerance. Here, freedom, marks of identity and the search for a personal safe space define the uniqueness and dignity of the Morisco community. Boabdil deals mainly with historical distortion and the restoration of his image. Throughout his story, the king of Granada displays the public and personal conflicts that emanated from his unwanted power and solitude. Given the opportunity to speak from their perspective, the voices of these historical minorities rewrite the moral and behavioral fallacies of Spain's past.

This study is made up of four sections: 1) an introduction and a section devoted to the historical framework and the aesthetics of the narrative of Post Civil War Spain and an explanation of historical novel and of critical theories (postmodern, poststructural and feminist theories)—which I will apply to the works studied, 2) a chapter dedicated to the study of Urraca and Toda, reina de Navarra, 3) a chapter devoted to the examination of Las Españas perdidas and El manuscrito carmesí and 4) a conclusion.

History, Narrative, the Aesthetics of the Historical Novel and Critical Framework

General Historical Framework of Post Civil War Spain

General Franco's death on November 20, 1975 signaled the end of the most anguished moment of Spanish history. The nearly forty years of repression tragically affected all levels of the Spanish society, from the economic to the technological. Under Franco's regime, anxiety and fear marked the life of Spaniards. Manuel Vázquez Montalbán believes that social and emotional restrictions imposed by this regime resulted in a lack of freedom of speech, of conscience and of action. As he indicated, "Existía esa sensación de sociedad esquizofrénica: se intentaba ser como los demás europeos, pero siempre estaba allí la figura de Franco y su maquinaria represiva para mantener el status quo impenetrable."¹

During the final years of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies, we witness a transformation, a process of relaxation of the repressive machinery of

the Spanish political institutions. This transformation leads to a gradual rapprochement between Spain and Europe. The encounter between these geographic spaces is principally related to the “Tourist Boom”: Spain became the favorite summer destination for a large number of Northern Europeans. With the opening of Spain’s borders, so came the arrival of new and fresh political and social ideas, ideas that had been censored by Franco’s dictatorship. Undoubtedly, the European tourists arrived in Spain with their vision of the world being very different from that of the Spaniards, theirs was a vision that represented, “una apertura forzosa debido al aparato ideológico impuesto por el turismo: traer libros de fuera, ideas de fuera.”²

Together with the arrival of new ideas due to the growth of tourism, we have to consider two transcendental events. On the one hand, we observe the increasing number of Spaniards who studied in foreign institutions. This international experience offered them contact with modern and more open ideas. On the other hand, Spanish emigrants also arrived during estival periods from countries such as Germany, France and Belgium. During the fifties and sixties, numerous Spaniards left the country to find a new beginning. These emigrants went back and forth carrying with them new social and political concepts and thoughts. In short, these individuals introduced democratic optimism to Spain. Their experiences became “un taller de experimentación profesional en donde se daba una toma de conciencia por sus derechos humanos y sus responsabilidades.”³ This transformation also increased with the descendents of emigrants. These young adults had been educated within a system that promoted freedom as

essential for progress and human understanding. They created a continuous flow of ideas that offered a fragile, yet exciting intellectual exchange.

The main catalyst for the definitive transformation of Spain was the death of General Franco. It produced the definitive fall of cultural, political and social barriers that permitted the pacific transition of the country from a totalitarian regime to a democratic state. For the first time since the Second Republic, Spain experienced political freedom, social equality and the recovery of personal liberty. With the exception of the February 23, 1981 uprising, the years 1976-1982 constituted a new beginning for Spanish society. The political party known as UCD (Unión de Centro Democrático) won the first democratic elections in more than forty years. Later, the new constitution of December 6, 1978 legally established all the categories of freedom and abolished censorship. Finally, the victory of PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) in the 1982 elections offered an image of Spain as ideologically stable, a country that was going to be ruled by the first leftist government since the end of the Civil War in 1939.

From this point on, Spain grew politically and socially in two important directions. First, the solidification of its ties with Europe that reached its pinnacle with Spain's admission to the European Economic Community in 1986. Second, we observe the development, cultural recuperation and reinforcement of the distinct autonomous regions. As result, Spaniards no longer see themselves as second-class Europeans; rather, they start to believe in themselves, as did the rest of the world.

Situation of the Spanish Novel in the Literary Present from the Post Civil War Novel to the Novel of the Nineties

The Spanish narrative of the last thirty years is the consequence of Spain's social transformations and literary experimentations initiated in the Post-Civil War era. We can see how this narrative contains characteristics that range from political and social protests of the fifties represented by social realism to the formal experimentalism of the late sixties and seventies. All these elements resulted in the postmodern novel of the eighties. This type of narrative represents a challenge to the established status quo, affecting the configuration of the Spanish society as well as the literary canon.

1. The Social Novel—*novela realista*—and the Existential Novel—*novela ensimismada*

The novelist of the Post Civil War era centers his or her energy on creating a narrative capable of counteracting the forced apathy resulting from the prevalent social conditions. Confronted by these conditions, individuals evaluate the meaning of humanity through a constant ethical examination. The Realist or Social Novel of this period is an intellectual instrument used by the novelist to question the foundations of his or her society. It represents a valid protest against the lack of aspirations and the impossibility of full development of human beings. This narrative portrays an individual surrounded by sorrow and pessimism and the anguish of an uncertain future.

Critics such as Constantino Bértolo have seen within the social novel of the Post Civil War a unique relationship between writers and readers since the main intention of the former was to represent a world without hope that the latter

were able to recognize as their own reality. Analyzing novels as Nada (1945), La familia de Pascual Duarte (1942) and La colmena (1951), Bértolo considers that these novels portray the factual reality of the period, the actual circumstances of time and space and the creation of symbolic referents identifiable by readers.⁴ Gonzalo Sobejano identifies it as a combination of two types of novel: the social novel and the existential novel. The first one establishes a direct link with contemporary life and seeks a just moral compromise with society. The second offers the author the possibility to experiment with the subject and his emotional conflicts. Here, the character's uncertainty and suffering makes him almost incapable of reaching decisions. The subject lacks the ability to establish a personal communication with his environment. Authors belonging to the first type of novel are Camilo José Cela, Carmen Laforet and Miguel Delibes. In the second category, we find writers such as Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, Carmen Martín Gaité and García Hortelano.⁵

María del Mar Langa Pizarro confirms the presence of these two distinct positions and emphasizes the interest of these writers in portraying a society that rejects the social welfare of its members.⁶ In her view, this narrative is the transmitter of the consciousness of its time:

Llegando a una visión plana de la lucha de clases en novelas que, aunque en distinto grado de compromiso, cumplieron casi siempre con el papel de proporcionar símbolos, de ser la conciencia de su tiempo para la pequeña burguesía lectora que rechazaba el franquismo. (18-19)

Along with the realist novel, the experimental novel is another vital component of the Spanish narrative of the twentieth century. The production of

the experimental novel, labeled by Sobejano as novela ensimismada (“structural novel”), mainly occurred during the sixties and the beginning of seventies. The realist novel suffered a process of exhaustion due to the social and economic changes initiated with the “tourist boom”; social realism went through a moment of uncertainty. The anguish present in the realist novel evolved into a narrative subjectivism that studied the conscience of those individuals who accept or reject their society. It is no longer about the rejection of an alienating world; rather, it is an attempt to finding out a way to reach their inner life. Bértolo indicates that narrative breaks with realism due to external and internal circumstances, the most important being the search for new cultural referents beyond Spain’s borders.⁷ For this critic, Juan Benet’s Una meditación (1969) is the beginning of the rupture with the realism because, “la novela dejaba de ser un lugar de lo público para devenir el reino de lo privado, y lo colectivo se convertía en mera suma de intimidades sin que lo político apareciera, al menos aparentemente, por ningún lado” (37).

Darío Villanueva chooses the year of 1962 as the crucial moment of in the development of the experimental novel. This is the year that Luís Martín Santos’s Tiempo de silencio was published. For this critic, this novel is the beginning and the end of the evolution of the realist novel. It is the end since it was the last time that the readers would be able to identify the existence of a social critique that confronts an obsolete political system. Nevertheless, it is also the beginning due to the narrative technique used by Martín Santos. This writer displays a discourse that is a combination of history and philosophy with a baroque-like style and the

use of metaphor and metonymy to meditate about the possibilities or, in this case, the impossibilities of a human project.⁸ Related to the experimental novel, Sobejano notes that such characters look for a solution to their internal conflicts by a constant movement from the private to the public sphere. It is possible to observe that the writer's primary intention is to identify individuals by their personal reference to the social context and society by its functional reference to individuals. This identification process emerges since the subject is incapable of knowing himself well enough. The only way that writers have to elevate the characters' human and psychological identity is by a double process of alteration and inner search. In the writings of Juan Benet, Luis Martín Santos and Juan Goytisolo, Sobejano identifies the existence of "discontinuity" that characterized their narratives. He defines it as, "el cambio frecuente o inmediato de lugares, personajes, perspectivas, temas del pensamiento o formas del discurso."⁹

Referring to the novels written in these years, Vázquez Montalbán speaks of the novela desconectada ("the disconnected novel"). For this critic, the lack of compromise with the inquietudes of readers along with the writers' desire to concentrate their efforts in the formal aspect of the novel rather than in plot or the psychology of characters typify this narrative. These authors affirm the superiority of the aesthetic and the formal aspects of narrative capable of emphasizing the linguistic purity of the texts. Eventually, there is a lack of connections with the historical, social and ideological interests of the world.¹⁰

2. The Novel of the “transición”: the Beginning of the Postmodern Novel

Parallel to the political changes experienced in 1976, literature embarks on a new creative dynamism. Although this process makes use of new intellectual tools within the process of literary creation, writers did not completely reject the precepts that had been used in Spain since the time of social realism. We will see now an improvement of literary elements that at first looked contradictory, but now appear in harmony within the novels of the Transition, the period that goes from 1976 to 1982. In this period, literature played a role of renovation that accommodates individuals to situations that affect their way of life. This was the time for a decrease of formalist and structural experimentation and for a reevaluation of what contradictory, what similar, what intrinsic and what temporary are; that is, the true essence of the Spanish society.

Vance Holloway indicates that scholars have been unable to define a unique dominating tendency within the literary spectrum of Spain since the late seventies. For Holloway, a large variety of literary inclinations ranging from the continuation of the social realism to the experimental baroque novel characterizes these years.¹¹ Some critics insist on the need to find a single narrative that, more than any other, would be representative of the new production. Eduardo Mendonza's La verdad sobre el caso Savolta (1975) has been considered as the beginning of what is known as the postmodern novel. For Bértolo, Mendoza's novel and Juan José Millás' Cerberos son las sombras (1975) are essential examples of the “Spanish New Narrative” because it contains an evident principle, the desire for the well-told story. Bértolo sees three major elements in

Mendoza's works that will have a major impact on subsequent writers, especially those of the "*Nueva Novela Histórica*." First, the storyline appears to guide reading. Second, the storyline is located in an obvious temporal and spacial framework that is easy to identify by the reader. Third, the narrative contains a dramatic unity.¹² Because of the combination of the experimental novel with innovative referents, writers return to the conception of writing as story telling.

Santos Alonso considers La verdad sobre el caso Savolta to be the beginning of the end of the experimental novel. For this critic, this novel offers different narrative techniques. In the first half of the novel, the author uses the counter point technique and dialogue, the first-person narration and the use of specific documentation such as letters and newspapers articles. The second half is more concerned with the clarification of the storyline and the desire to tell a story.¹³ Langa Pizarro insists that the impact of Mendoza's work is due to the erosion of the Spanish novel in the late sixties and the beginning of the seventies. Like Santos Alonso, she sees the importance of the telling a story as its principal feature. Langa Pizarro also observes the presence of narrative elements from the Post Civil War novel such as the realism, but now it is "enriquecido, por nuevas perspectivas, por el tratamiento formal y psicológico" (26).

3. The Novel under Democracy: Literary Solidification of the Postmodern Novel

From the year of 1982, the novel produced in Spain is known as the novel of the democratic period, and as an essential part of the "Literature of the distension." It is a moment in which writers want to please their public in an interactive relationship between their works and their readers.

With antecedents as Mendoza's La verdad sobre el caso Savolta and El misterio de la cripta embrujada (1979), this novel of the "democracy" is a symbiotic combination between the narrative and the creative process. Fátima Serra offers an approach similar to that of Bértolo or Santos Alonso. She sees in the novel of the eighties a refreshing production since, "en los 80, y una vez superado el periodo de la transición, se alcanzó una España posibilista donde el mito, la fantasía y el gusto por el relato se incorporaron a la narrativa" (12). She notes new characteristics such as the narrative element of romance, the search for identity, the increasing production of subgenres as the historical and detective novels and the influence of the mass media and market economy.¹⁴

Paradoxically, literary production is no longer constrained by social and political preoccupations. There is a separation between writers and militant literature, either for or against Franco's defunct regime. As democracy brought a new political system, censorship disappeared and writers and critics became more familiar with foreign aesthetic tendencies. Andrés Amorós sees this escape from the political writing as the result of the literary richness that Spain experienced at the beginning of the eighties. This prolific output is due to the use of the imagination, the aesthetic tendencies of the moment and the ludic experimentation. Holloway identifies one essential tendency in the novel of democratic Spain as postmodern novel. He explains how the works of writers as José María Merino, Juan José Millás, Germán Sánchez Espeso, particularly En alas de las mariposas (1985) and José María Guelbenzu's El río de la luna (1981) contains postmodern elements such as the hybridization of canonical and marginal

writings, the combination of elitism and populism, and the use of the pastiche. For Holloway, the archetype of the Spanish postmodern novel is once again Mendonza's La verdad sobre el caso Savolta. It is here that the parody of customs, intertextual subversions, questioning metafiction and the combination of popular and cultured elements, the general characteristics of the postmodern novel, are clearly displayed.¹⁵

To the extent that postmodern texts are hybrid productions in which we find symbolic aesthetics together with parody and simulacra of genres, we can say that postmodernism is the artistic referent of the Spanish democratic novel. Writers now develop infinite possibilities while creating their own particular narrative worlds, ranging from a mere singularity to a large variety of possible representations. They enjoy, use and recuperate self-referential and ironic writings and intertextuality, all necessary to adapt their works to the literary times in which they live and create.

The Aesthetics of the Historical Novel

The historical novel is one of the most prolific genres produced within the literary environment of democratic Spain. Critics have traditionally defined the historical novel as a particular narration that attempts to accurately represent a specific period of the past. The author must possess a solid knowledge of the historical context in which he finds a real base where fiction and action exists. He imposes his personal style upon the historical individuality of each character. His maximum aspiration is to show the historical circumstances of his personages through poetic elements.

The “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” possesses the capacity to return to history and to portray alternative perspectives distinct from the official historiographical discourse. When writers now create historical narratives, they attempt to fill in the lack of information, activities and contributions from documented history. The new political situation in Spain facilitates the purpose of the writers. They explore the past with independence, free from outside social and political pressures. Their works offer a rereading of history and a motivated questioning of what the official and centralized power has ignored and suppressed throughout centuries. These new foundations of the historical novel will establish the significance of the narratives that we will study within the literary panorama of Spain.

The genesis of the historical novel begins with Romanticism. Many critics consider Sir Walter Scott the initiator of this literary genre. Three major aspects distinguish Scott’s historical novel: a) the existence of exemplary models—generic characteristics—that intervene in the historical fiction, b) the introduction of historical romanticism in the nineteenth century novel and c) the interrelations between historical and literary discourse. The propagation of Scott’s works all over the European continent and their categorization as the prototype of the historical novel creates the formal and semantic bases necessary for recognizing it as a literary genre.

Georg Lukács considers Scott’s historical novel as the classic example. He identifies the following general characteristics derived from the work of the Scottish writer: the use of a prosaic or mediocre hero that represents antagonist groups in conflict, the emphasis of the writer on historical and social type’s

individuality and, finally, a manipulative society that restrains the realm of action of its characters. Lukács observes that historical, semi-historical and non-historical subjects represent the center of their societies because they emerge as the result of the aspirations and conflicts of such societies. He recognizes these aspirations and conflicts as the economic and historical foundations of a particular age. Two historical events define such theoretical parameters: the French Revolution of 1789 and the collapse of Napoleon Bonaparte's empire. Both contain the knowledge necessary to settle the fundamental nature of historical consciousness. It is realization of men that they are and they see themselves as the result of their participation in the formation of history.¹⁶ By using the model of the classic romantic novel, Lukács believes that the writer's main goals will be to represent the historical reality in all its complexity. He will fully portray the apparently hidden events that are the consequence of the social and human actions.¹⁷ The historical novel vigorously shows the plasticity in the reproduction of the reality necessary to clearly observe the conditions of the character's existence that without which it will be no more than a simple anecdote.

Amado Alonso detects an internal conflict between historical information and poetic (literary) creation. He distinguishes two ideas related to the historical novel: archeology and history. In his view, history deals with the succession of illustrious, individual and collective actions. In contrast, archeology observes the cultural environment where all actions take place.¹⁸ For Alonso, the majority of historical novels has archeology as their intellectual foundation.¹⁹ He agrees with Lukács about the importance of Scott's work. Alonso also believes in the natural

predisposition of the historical narrative's writer toward what he considers the archeological element. Such an aspect will help him to use the sublime to emphasize the universal sense of the human being. Here, the general essence of men reveals their most profound magnitude. Life and its circumstances are valuable by themselves as soon as it is possible to set them at the same level of universal values.²⁰ The cultural situation of archeology allows writers to present and represent "the spirit of an age." Writers leave behind the most poetic vision of life and focus on the necessary intellectual and critical attitude to reconstruct the past.²¹

Celia Fernández Prieto develops her critical works around the genesis and evolution of the historical novel and its poetic. She distinguishes a process of evolution from its medieval antecedents and the Romantic historical novel to the realist novel, the Latin American and the present of the historical novel. Fernández agrees with the idea of Romanticism as the moment when modern constructions of the genre appear. She sees Scott as the key figure in its development within European literature.²² For her, the historical novel is the product of distinctive elements of the novel accumulated through centuries. She summarizes five significant points: first, the historical novel takes narrative tactics such as suspense and surprise from the romance. Second, it takes particular scenarios such as dark castles, dungeons, lugubrious landscapes, etc from the gothic novel. Third, it uses private and intimate worlds and the characters' internal conflict from the social-realist novel. Fourth, it borrows the detailed description of everyday life from Costumbrismo ("literature of manners").

Finally, the use of metanarrative—the narrated events are documented by the existence of a manuscript—as suggested by Cervantes’ art.

In addition to these five characteristics, Fernández Prieto notices four intrinsic features within the historical novel: a) a specific reconstruction of the historical past, preferably the Middle Ages, b) the diegesis is constructed with historical and invented elements, c) the axis of the story is a romance plot based in its ability to maintain the readers’ attention and d) the presence of an omniscient extradiegetic narrator characterized by his/her multiple possibilities.²³ In accordance with Hayden White and his theoretical approach to the stylistic and formal possibilities that the literary narrative offers the historian, Fernández Prieto explains the importance of the historical novel as a literary genre. It emerges from the idea of rewriting history from fiction because it is “un contrato híbrido, ambíguo, en tanto que se presenta como ficción y como historia” (197).

Pablo Gil Casado focuses his critical approach to the historical novel on the function of the characters in political and historical events. He documents the historical novel’s transformation from Romanticism and Galdosian realism to what he defines as the populist novel from 1928 to 1939.²⁴ For Casado, this type of novel emphasizes the existence of the hero as a product of the collective entity. The individual disappears because the foremost feature of the novel is the importance of the community over the subject, “la captación de lo colectivo implica el desvanecimiento del relieve individual y de la problemática privada.” (133) This populist historical novel is the representation of communal virtues, the

moral attributes that define people.²⁵ Class ideology is the primary *raison d'être* of the fiction.

María del Pilar Palomo presents a different view of the historical novel. According to her, it contains three essential components: the veracity of the narrated events, the sincerity in the presentation of the actors and events and finally, the fable.²⁶ She adds two more categories already defined by Cicero, recuperating them in order to explain the foundation of the contemporary representation of the genre in Spain: a) the narration as a teacher about life, a learning mechanism for the reader, and b) the narration as a lesson or advice derived from past events.²⁷ Finally Palomo shows the historical novel's true impact on the literary landscape of democratic Spain since “sólo entre 1975 y 1988 he contado, sin ningún criterio exhaustivo, más de cincuenta títulos significativos” (80).

The recovery of the principle of a well-told story is directly connected with the proliferation of the “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” in Spain. Darío Villanueva speaks of a phenomenon called “the blossoming of the historical novel.” The literary validity of this new historical novel contains two essential characteristics: the recuperation of the narrative, as in the pleasure of telling stories, and the interest for romance. For Villanueva, history is the true origin of the story. The historical novel can be determined by four principles: a) the reconstruction of a verisimilar past, b) fabulation; that is, the presence of an adventure with a plot, c) the transcendent projection of the past upon us and d) the temporal separation of the narrated events as a motif for exercises of style.²⁸

Langa Pizarro validates the presence of a “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” that deconstructs culturally imposed myths and is outside the influence of the official discourse. She analyzes historical novels such as Felix de Azúa’s Mansura (1984) or J. A. Gabriel y Galan’s El bobo ilustrado (1986). Their representation of the historical events implies liberation, a valid mechanism for opposing traditional forms since “se acerca a los acontecimientos sin la distancia épica característica de la historiografía oficial y de la novela histórica tradicional” (82). Holloway detects the presence of two major reasons that explain the proliferation of the “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” : the suppression of censorship and the free expression of social criticism.²⁹ Santos Alonso sees the year of 1976 as the beginning of the rebirth of the historical novel. After Franco’s death, the public wanted to learn about what had been silenced by the dictatorship because, as he explains, now “se percibe una curiosidad por la evocación de estos acontecimientos trascendentales desde nuevos puntos de vista que no hicieron posibles la censura imperante y la autorepresión durante el franquismo”(23).

Biruté Ciplijauskaitė explains that the main intention of the contemporary feminine novel produced from 1970 to 1985 is the promotion of the role of women as literary active subjects. Traditionally, female subjects had been represented from an exteriorized perspective. Male subjects have been the dominant fictional elements thereby relegating women to a status of passive participants of fiction. Literature is undergoing an impressive transformation, since their participation in all aspects of society has increased. In all women’s fictional works, including the “*Nueva Novela Histórica*,” Ciplijauskaitė sees a

desire to explore the reasons of their assigned silent space and to clarify and rectify the official discourse. In historical novels, female subjects assume a functional position. She notes that contemporary writers often chose the Middle Ages because there they find exceptional women as alternatives to the logocentric order. The concept of history and its configuration has changed and now it embraces a feminine perspective. For her, the historical novel in democratic Spain affirms the complexity of the particular and affective “I” with an independent attitude.³⁰

It is important to clarify the historical and thematic spaces more commonly visited by Spanish writers. Fátima Serra speaks of three types of historical loci visited since the end of the seventies through the decade of the eighties: the Middle Ages, the War of Independence of 1808-1812 and the Civil War of 1936. She adds an extra thematic space, the Promised Land. For Serra, the desired lost paradise represented in the Post Civil War literature—the Second Republic for some and Imperial Spain for others—is no longer reliable since “según va creciendo el optimismo en la década de los 80, los entes de ficción se van acercando a la consecución de sus sueños” (14). Palomo also studies the different historical ages explored in the Spanish narrative from the end of the seventies, including those of historical topics or historical adventures.³¹ There is a variety of thematic and temporal spaces. Novels as Fernández Santos’ Extramuros (1979) and Cabrera (1981) and Paloma Díaz-Mas’ El rapto del santo Grial (1984), Vallejo-Nájera’s Yo, el intruso (1987) and Víctor Chamorro’s El pasmo (1987) explore different historical moments such as the Roman period, the Middle Ages

and the last years of the Restauración (“Restoration”). These historical novels contain a combination of the use of fable and extreme fantasy within the framework of historical events.

Abraham Martín-Maestro sees in the new historical novel the presence of a triumvirate: the realist and referential historical novel, the historical novel that focuses on the literary sign and the historical novel that develops an extrapolation from contemporary situations and events. He confirms the importance of the critical and creative tendency of the new historical novel and finds four favorite periods: Modernism, Romanticism, the Baroque and the Middle Ages.³² Finally, Holloway finds a more open division of the historical spaces represented in these novels, although his division agrees more with the Villanueva’s categories.³³

The essence of “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” thus clarifies and reaffirms the present. It deconstructs the monolithic linear past, decomposing its discursive structure. It also recuperates and validates the unheard voices displaced by the national mythology, especially those of women and the tragic and forgotten figures of the national past. Literature now becomes the voice for those marginalized by History; a process that in Spain started in the Sixties with the novels of Juan Goytisolo in which the memories of those defeated by history become predominant against the official version of the past.

Theoretical and Critical Framework

The “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” causes the collapse of the historical discourse’s referential values. It offers diverse possible readings of the past that include the demystification of traditional knowledge and the reconsideration of

the role of the untouchable hero. Within these novels, there are also technical, thematic and stylistic elements that call into question a homogeneous view of reality in favor of a more heterogeneous one, the fundamental nature of which resides in the female subject and the voice of the “Other.” The use of critical approaches such as postmodernism, poststructuralism and feminist theories will help us reveal this transgressive process. The relevance of the literary innovations developed in the novels studied, in the context of this new historical novel, will become evident through theoretical tools available in the works of thinkers like Ihab Hassan, Frederick Jameson, J. F. Lyotard, Linda Hutcheon, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, and Stephen Greenblatt.

The subversion of power structures and the impossibility to demonstrate the existence of a universal truth—the unquestioned received vision of history — become two of the most important aspects of this analysis. Postmodern theory emphasizes the articulation of *différance* and the crisis of the absolute uniformity of individuals and society, which produces the variety of outcomes of a cultural rebellion. Within the literary field, postmodernism implies the practice of a narrative with multiple discourses and rejects monolithic constructions of identity. With the use of pastiche, parody, irony and the ludic aspect of lexical and aesthetic structures, postmodernist texts attempt to rewrite Western intellectual traditions since the existing meta-narratives inherited since the Enlightenment undergo a thorough evaluative process. The collapse of the hierarchical order, the presence of a mixture of codes and the triumph of stylistic eclecticism erase all

frontiers: the separation between public and private perspectives as well as the official and the alternative discourses.

1. Postmodern Criticism

“Postmodernism: a paracritical bibliography” (1971) is Ihab Hassan’s first attempt at defining postmodernism. In Paracriticism: Seven Speculations of the Times (1975) and The Postmodern Turn. Essays in postmodern theory and culture (1987), postmodernism appears as a transformative movement that refutes cultural elitism. Hassan sees it as anti-elitist and anti-authoritarian, organized around a pluralistic perspective on culture. His vision of postmodern theoretical parameters of literary works recognizes discontinuous and open critical structures that allow art to function as a communal production characterized by an anarchic spirit.

One more characteristic that Hassan notes is the emergence of repressed minority voices that struggle for recognition against homogeneous dominant cultures.³⁴ He sees a parallel between postmodernism and a certain conception of History. Both can be measured by a continuous or discontinuous methodology that has as a main consequence, “the alternative confirmation in the present of ideas and institutions from the past” (84).

The French thinker Jean-François Lyotard develops his particular vision of Postmodernism in The Postmodern Condition (1979) and in the essay “Answering the question: What is Postmodernism?” (1982). Lyotard believes that postmodern artistic creations emphasize peripheral voices, a heterogeneous view of reality and the improbability of History’s universalism. It is a major breakthrough when facing the prevalent dominant aesthetics. What he refers as the postmodern

condition is the abandonment of the negative intellectual construction of the subject of the present times. He rejects modern myths and emphasizes the failure of the sciences and philosophy to restore the unity of Humanity as is evident in the disastrous consequences that modernity has inflicted on society such as utter poverty, bureaucracy and oppression. For Holloway, Lyotard's vision of Postmodernism, "plantea una reacción subversiva frente a la sociedad occidental" (43).

The cause of the intellectual deterioration of Western societies is what he calls legitimating meta-narratives. He considers that such narratives require a space able to overcome the same nature described within them and to offer a socio-historical totality. He confirms that these meta-narratives (les grands récits) are neither sufficient nor adequate to define the contradictions accumulated within them. The artist thus searches for a relative and fragmented story, defying and rejecting any rhetoric of truth or progress. Lyotard defends what he calls the micro-story (les petits récits) related mainly to the experimental, the marginalized and the idea of difference. He finally sees postmodernism as a textual strategy marked by transgression, resistance and protest against the values of social elitism.

Frederick Jameson's principal work is Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (1991), (several parts of it were published as an article in the New Left Review in 1984). He explores and questions the social, economic and cultural changes that postmodern criticism can offer. For Jameson, postmodernism is a cultural construct that emerges as a consequence of the

dissolution of late bourgeois hegemony's and the development of the mass media culture. He sees as principal features of postmodernism the deconstruction of expression, simulacra and nostalgia, emphasizing their ability to erase the distinction between high and low culture. The result of this egalitarian process is the production of fragmentary and highly heterogeneous images. For Jameson, peripheral and alternative cultures have the possibility "to coexist with official representations" (57). He also calls into questioning the culture of simulacra because it is the massive manifestation of the superficial.

Jameson sees in the pastiche the fundamental nature of the culture of simulacra. He understands pastiche as an empty parody that lacks a critical and historical dimension and "where there is only an imitation of past styles without satirical or ironic intentions" (65). As a consequence, he observes in the culture of simulacra the accumulation of identical copies of a nonexistent object rather than an objective vision of the same object. Postmodernism thus represents a negative tendency because it is a ludic creation unable to portray a veridical past due to a lack of compromise. The result is the production of irregular and disconnected cultural objects that present subjective images of the past without judgments.

New theoretical approaches see postmodernist analysis as a tool for critical debate and resistance and intellectuals reveal new possibilities for its use. For instance, it helps to reveal the justification for the challenge of the official discourse of the past, the motivations behind the modifications of these discourses and the consequences of an alternative speech.

Linda Hutcheon has written on the transgressive aspect of the “historiographic metafiction.” In A Poetic of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction (1988) Hutcheon observes the parodic and critical aspect of postmodern literature. She separates her theoretical principles from those of critics such as Jameson, who rejected the ability of this critical approach to question societal and political forces and operations. In relation to Hutcheon’s theory, Holloway reasserts that postmodern literary productions effectively contribute to the dismantling of the system of absolute values and social structures established in today’s world. As he points out, “(El posmodernismo) desvaloriza absolutos ideológicos tales como el padre, Diós, el estado o el sujeto humano” (52).

“Historiographic metafiction” are novels characterized by their self-reflexive and self-referential nature, where the plot develops through a narrative of events and the depiction of historical characters.³⁵ We find in this type of text a symbiotic relationship between theory and history that corroborates political and historical realities. Within this context, it is possible to restructure, to discuss and remold the past in its totality. This critical approach questions the validity of supposedly quintessential truths about the past. The use of parody and irony disputes not only the objectivity of the traditional narrative but also the importance of the documents employed to justify its relevance in the absence of other interpretative realities that may take place within the narration. A distancing from historiographic metafiction allows the questioning and subversion of intellectual, social and political structures as well as the official discourse of the past.³⁶ The consequence of this questioning is the recuperation and the vindication

of the peripheral subject's opinion and the rapid fall of the centralized view of history.

One of the most important critics of Spanish postmodernism is Gonzalo Navajas. In Teoría y práctica de la novela española posmoderna (1987) Navajas applies the general tenets of this critical approach to Spanish narratives. He puts special emphasis on the relevance of masculine and feminine discourses by focusing on the elements of uncertainty that the traditional analytical and referential method of knowledge contains. For Navajas, literature is a suggestive simulation, “ya que su función se concibe como la desvelación de los mecanismos falsos que ocultan la manifestación de la imposibilidad del conocimiento” (15). He is also interested in the boomerang effect of postmodernism. For him, the beginning and the end of the fictional trajectory are the same; the subject and the text from which the subject emerges. This movement of departing from oneself in order to arrive at the same self is essential to understanding the “I/Other” polarity. He believes that the subject becomes such by the self-search of a legitimate “I” as opposed to external deformations. The feminine subject thus appears as a literary referent that transcends the traditional depiction of women as powerless and subordinated subjects. For Navajas, postmodern texts attempt to change the traditional structures of power through sexual subversion. Excluding the masculine figure as a symbol of domination, there is a transformation of women from object to subject through the control of words and writing. Women appear as reliable characters in and of themselves, without the need of a masculine referent.

It is necessary to mention that, when talking about postmodernism, critics do not agree on a single definition of the concept. For some, postmodernism is a periodic term that comes right after modernism, for others it is a way of approaching life without necessarily being a chronologic situation. There are critics who see postmodernism in a negative way, others who see it in a positive way and there are some who negate it. For the purpose of this study, I will concentrate on its possibilities to subvert the rigid hierarchy established by the literary canon, facing the past with an ironic glimpse. In due so, novels present the reader with an anti-elitist vision of the past giving way to pluralism. The “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” legitimizes the “Other”, questions all cultural prerogatives and uses pastiche as a liberating literary form.

2. Poststructural Criticism: Deconstruction

The foremost intention of deconstruction has to deal with the idea of the subject through the transformation of the notion of the written sign. It questions the unity of the stable sign that, as an analogy for the subject, will project a multiplicity of meanings. This perpetual mutation, a deconstruction of all hierarchies, transforms the way in which we perceive reality. This theoretical approach thus develops a criticism of the concept of causality, the concept of subject and truth.

Poststructuralism is directly related to the principles of the Derridian deconstruction. In Of Grammatology (1976), Jacques Derrida overturns the Western metaphysical tradition regarding the acquisition and interpretation of knowledge by revealing the impossibility of a fixed and stable meaning. The

transcendental signified “implied by all categories or all determined significations, by all lexicons and all syntax, and therefore by all linguistic signifiers” does not exist (20). For Derrida, this impossibility constitutes the instability of the sign because multiple meanings reject the notion of a single, fundamental one. It is impossible to have access to an absolute truth due to the existence of different and unequal signifiers. We cannot agree with the presence of a permanent dominant discourse because a sign with multiple significations cannot assure “true” knowledge. Deconstruction proposes a revision of our relationship with reality in terms of this new reading strategy that will allow us to explore the inside and the outside of the familiar epistemological structures to see both beyond the blind spot necessary to create the absolute discourse of power.

In Margins of Philosophy (1982), Derrida reviews the relations between identity and truth. In philosophy, the foundations of identity and truth are characterized by presence, in that they exist of themselves, apart from anything else. In attempting to define these kinds of absolutes, metaphysics has continually constructed binary oppositions, such as nature/culture, man/woman, black/white, positive/negative. In each case, the opposition is hierarchical, giving priority to the first term over the inferior second, as is the case of speech/writing. Derrida doubts the certainty of the Cartesian individual when he questions the existence of a superior consciousness given the multiplicity of meanings and the unavailability of a subject. Consequently, such process produces a difference, the *différance*. All language is constituted by *différance*, words are the deferred presences of the things they “mean,” and their meaning is grounded in different significations. It is

an essential feature that allows the sign to have multiple signified in opposition to the single one that Western philosophy posits. As a result, the representational impossibility of a single signified makes it materially impossible for any entity to contain just one meaning. Due to these multiple substitutions, deconstruction questions the phallogentric and hierarchical structure of power as well as binary oppositions because they are unable to take into account the openness of the signifier. For Derrida, every sign exists in a continuum where multiple signified supplement each other. As a sign, the subject can no longer be understood as unique but instead must be viewed as multiple and complex.

3. Feminist Theories

The Feminist critical paradigm propounds sexual and gender equality. It attempts to subvert the sexist foundation of the phallogentric culture. Woman as an independent subject with an autonomous discourse is the main tenet of feminist criticism. The notion of women as independent subjects rejects authoritarian truth and is the sender and the beneficiary of protective and personal speech. With a new perception on subjectivity, sexuality, desire and a personal language, feminist criticism aims at transforming cultural and power structures as well as at subverting conventional stereotypes and gender differences established to create, support and perpetuate the patriarchal system. Influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray are the major representatives of feminist criticism.

Julia Kristeva establishes a relation between the transgression and the interruption of the normal function of the power structures. Her theoretical

approach is known as semanalysis. Her approach modifies Lacanian terminology of the imaginary and symbolic, substituting for the semiotic and the symbolic respectively. For Kristeva, the essence of human behavior is the violent tension between the rational and homogeneous and the irrational and the heterogeneous. The symbolic attempts to enclose the semiotic in a logical and rational level of existence. A constant conflict subsists between the semiotic and the symbolic.

In Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art (1980) Kristeva questions the hegemony of the symbolic, which is always linked to the repressive figure of the father. It cannot produce a unique subject since it is the result of constant changes that invite “its renovation beyond its actual shape” (135). She proposes a "new" semiotics, which she defines as semiology or semanalysis, wherein meaning is conceived of as a signifying process rather than a sign system. Semiology conceives the theory of the split subject. Here, the subject is continuously reinventing itself and it is indefinable and inconsistent. Semanalysis transforms poetic discourses because it is capable of transgressing and remolding social limitations. The subject of poetic language frequently oversteps the symbolic laws of language but at same time, it stays inside the limitations of these laws and reinvents its presence within the context of referential communications. This principle invites a potential deconstruction of hierarchies because the tension created cannot sustain a fixed image. Kristeva's theoretical approach promises a transgressive process that allows the exploration of peripheral and alternative discourses.

Hélène Cixous's criticism contains two essential elements: first, Derrida's critique of structures of binary opposition that implies a rejection of every form of thought based on hierarchies and antagonism. Second, the consolidation of feminine writing, for which the main characteristic is the relevance of the female body. In the second half of Newly Born Woman, in Sorties (1975) and in her essay "The laugh of Medusa" (1975), Cixous attempts to overturn the dominant phallogocentric discourses and repressive practices that have relegated women to the margins and rejected them for being unstable and unpredictable. In "The laugh of the Medusa", Cixous indicates the importance of writing as an essential element for women's liberation. Writing is the only tool to effect the subversive construction of being and to cancel gender oppositions. Feminine writing, which talks for, by and about women, produces conscious and autonomous identities that undermine the phallogocentric discourse, whose existence is dependent upon a non-autonomous, subservient female identity.³⁷ Cixous unveils the creative diversity of the feminine subject and the existence of a new language that articulates and validates independent feminine texts.³⁸ In Sorties, Cixous rejects specific hierarchical oppositions of Western philosophy. Intellectual structures such as matter/shape or speaking/writing, maintain a privileged element that violently represses its contrary that is subsumed in the male/female opposition. For the formation of the subject, the presence of the "Other" is necessary in order to recognize our individual characteristics. The problem is the Other's real position. Its side of the equation is insecure and dependent versus the confidence and strength of the self. In a patriarchal society, the dominant masculine establishment

subjugates woman. She is needed as the repressed subject in order to sustain the self-conception of men as individuals. A reconstruction of the logocentric order in which the idea of Man is not dependent upon the system of subjugation and repression of women is needed to allow for a just coexistence of the sexes.

Cixous uses writing to subvert the patriarchal order. Writing becomes the tool to establish women's perspectives on the concept of sex and on what sexual difference means. (85) It reformulates cultures and the vision of the feminine subject. She conceives the feminine literary creation as a type of alternative writing that rejects the fixed categories of the stable constructions of being. She postulates the existence of plural and mutable feminine subjects capable of diffusing the established notion of a monolithic subjectivity. Cixous sees the written page as a privileged space that transforms the power system by desire, sexual and gender differences related to the female body. (91-92) The relationship between language and body at the subconscious level alters the traditional perception of a distinct and independent subject. This concept of a fragmented subjectivity becomes decisive to reevaluate societal issues.

Luce Irigaray uses psychoanalysis from a feminine point of view; as a critical instrument to question the basic tenants of the Lacanian psychoanalytic school especially in regard to its logocentric description of the female psyche. She considers this view as a logical consequence of Western philosophy's submission to the phallogocentric patriarchal system, which is postulated on the oppression of women. As a method to evade this patriarchal construct, Irigaray advocates a personal, independent female language. In Speculum of the other

woman (1985) and The sex which is not one (1985) Irigaray considers Western philosophy's negative constructions of women, especially Freud's considerations on feminine sexuality, as forms of women's oppression. Western culture recognizes a single gender. Women are the Other; the subordinated gender whose representation is only a diminished reflection of the masculine subject. She also rejects binary oppositions and proposes multiple perspectives to evaluate facts or issues. Irigaray believes that women are not represented by existing symbolic systems. They do not have an independent place in a patriarchal world. Irigaray proposes that women need a value system in which the masculine subject neither suppresses nor divides them. In opposition to the incomplete and deficient conventional image of women in Western thought, Irigaray creates a feminine referential system able to render their proper relevance within society. We (men included) can achieve such a goal by a powerful intellectual tool: a new language that, while subverting the logocentric discourse, creates a space for the "Other." Irigaray analyzes the concept of the "Other" through an erotic perspective that provides the imagery to disrupt the phallogentric representative function.

4. New Historicism

New Historicism reevaluates historical truth in texts. Since the 1980's, New Historicism questions and reflects on the cultural studies that have taken place in the past. The New Historicists consider fundamental the examination of historical discourse while observing and respecting the existing conflicts within a society, the customs represented by a particular society and the forces that control its power structures. Mainly influenced by Foucault's work, New Historicism

explores the exchanges and negotiations between the aesthetic and the social discourses that happened in the past in order to understand the present. This critical approach attempts to solidify the relationships between history and literature by placing them in the same epistemological system.

In Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare (1980), Greenblatt states the importance of language; literature and society within literary works, presenting a direct link between literature and political institutions. There is a connection between writing, speaking and the outside world. The artistic creation is not an isolated event because there are determining elements that are partially responsible for its existence. External historical conditions constantly challenge the limits of discourse thus creating heterogeneous, contradictory and antagonistic entities that coexist within certain cultural practices. (256) In Greenblatt's terms, subversion is the expression of a personal need defined in relation to what the subject is not. The meaning of texts is no longer fixed and stable; rather, it multiplies into a myriad of interpretations that enrich and strengthen the literary narrative.

The use of these critical approaches will reveal the subversion of power structures and the constructions of identity within the following novels: Urraca, Toda, reina de Navarra, Las Españas perdidas and El manuscrito carmesí. In the case of Urraca and Toda, reina de Navarra I will use postmodern, feminist and deconstruction theories in terms of subversion of social and cultural hierarchies, the formation of the feminine subject and the rearranging of the binary opposition "I/Other." Postmodern parody will be also used in the analysis of Toda. In the

case of Las Españas perdidas and El manuscrito carmesí, I will use postmodern, post-structural and postcolonial theories to contest the insider/outsider and the center/periphery notions as well as the institutionalized historical truth.

Notes

Introduction

¹ Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, “La novela española entre el posfranquismo y el posmodernismo,” La renovation du roman espagnol depuis de 1975 (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1991) 13-25.

² Pedro José Chamizo Dominguez and José Luís Gómez-Martínez, ed. Los Ensayistas: España 1975-1990. (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers Inc, 1991) 5-9.

³ Ibid., 7.

⁴ Constantino Bértolo, “Introducción a la narrativa española actual,” Revista de Occidente (Madrid, 1989) 31.

⁵ Gonzalo Sobejano, “Direcciones de novela española de posguerra,” Novelistas Españoles de Posguerra (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1976) 49-56.

⁶ M. Mar Longa Pizarri, Del franquismo a la modernidad: la novela española (1975-1999) (Alicante: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alicante, 2000)

⁷ Bértolo, 36.

⁸ Darío Villanueva, “la novela,” Letras Españolas: 1976-1986 (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1987) 21.

⁹ Sobejano, 56-57.

¹⁰ Vázquez Montalbán, 8-19.

¹¹ Vance Holloway, El Posmodernismo y otras tendencias de la novela española (1967-1995) (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1999) 9-11

¹² Bértolo, 43-45.

¹³ Santos Alonso, La novela en la transición (1976-1981) (Madrid: Libros Dante, 1983) 12-15.

¹⁴ Fátima Serra, La Nueva Narrativa Española: Tiempo de Tregua entre Ficción e Historia (Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 2000) 44.

¹⁵ Holloway identifies the essential characteristics of postmodernism in the works of Mendonza, Sánchez Espeso and Guelbenzu. From Mendoza’s fictions, he emphasizes the search for authenticity and the relevance of the ironic and satiric’s double meaning. From Sánchez Espeso’s novel, he reveals the postmodern feature of “la tensión pardódica entre lo afirmado y lo subversivo” and from Guelbenzus’ work, Holloway sees the postmodern in the playful and ludic combination of elements such as memory, consciousness and fantasy. 104-124.

¹⁶ Georg Lukas, The Historical Novel (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983) 19.

¹⁷ As Lukács sees: “Scott endeavours to portray the struggles and antagonism of history by means of characters who, in their psychology and destiny, always represent social trends and historical forces.” 34.

- ¹⁸ Amado Alonso, Ensayo sobre la novela histórica: el modernismo en La gloria de don Ramiro (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1984) 8-9.
- ¹⁹ Alonso believes Manzoni's works combines the human essence with the poetic characteristics of the novel since, "en Manzoni, la novela histórica es poesía, y su libro no sólo nos informa: nos forma" 20-21.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 18.
- ²¹ Ibid., 19.
- ²² Celia Fernández Prieto, Historia y novela: poética de la novela histórica (Pamplona: Eunsia, 1998) 85.
- ²³ This narrator plays different functions such as being the editor of the original manuscript or developing ideological and narrative functions that allows him to be parallel to the reader's same temporal level of commitment.
- ²⁴ Pablo Gil Casado, "La novela histórica española: praxis del personaje colectivo," La Chispa (1987) 131-3.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 134.
- ²⁶ María del Pilar Palomo, "La novela histórica en la narrativa española actual," Narrativa Española Actual (Madrid: Servicio de publicaciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha., 1990) 79.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 79.
- ²⁸ Villanueva, 36.
- ²⁹ Holloway, 129.
- ³⁰ Birute Ciplijauskaitė, La novela femenina contemporánea (1970-1985): Hacia una topología de la narración en primera persona (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1994) 124-5.
- ³¹ We have seen what the characteristics that define the historical novel are. The "novela de aventuras histórica" is characterized by the "aesthetic of history." For Palomo, this type of novel only accepts the historical background, as we can see in Terence Moix's fictions. 86.
- ³² Abraham Martín-Maestro, "La novela española en 1984," Anales de la literatura española contemporánea (Madrid: 1984) 123-141.
- ³³ Holloway, 132.
- ³⁴ Hassan, 25-27.
- ³⁵ Hutcheon confirms that every historiographic metafiction establishes a constructive links between the theoretical formation of history and literature and human factor, i.e., writers and their audience. 5.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 125.
- ³⁷ Cixous, 279.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 291.

CHAPTER I

TWO WOMEN, TWO QUEENS: POWER, ORDER, WORDS AND HISTORY IN LOURDES ORTIZ'S URRACA AND ANGELES DE IRISARRI'S TODA, REINA DE NAVARRA

Introduction

1. The Representation of Women and the New Historical Novel of Democratic Spain.

Independent and accomplished women characters are absent from the canonized works in history and literature. The dominant system has attempted to silence and marginalize their voices. Both female writers and their literary representations have had to face enormous social and cultural barriers when they have attempted to communicate their world perspective. However, in today's Spain, writers find in sociological and cultural critical systems the tools to express a strong feminine presence. Postmodern and feminist theories provide an intellectual apparatus to better understand Lourdes Ortiz's Urraca (1982) and Angeles de Irisarri's Toda, reina de Navarra (1991) where this alternative voice is heard.

The main objective of this chapter is to analyze the intersection of the feminist critique of patriarchy and the postmodernist critique of the subject's representation in Spain's "*Nueva Novela Histórica*." Postmodernism and feminist theories have a common critical standpoint: the presentation of the crisis of

Western cultural structures and traditions. These analytic theories establish a new dialogue with the past. They revalorize history by contesting the centralized literary canon while emphasizing an alternative discourse to the phallogentric order and thus legitimizing silenced and ignored voices.¹

Admittedly, postmodernist and feminist theories have different critical approaches. Feminist criticism ponders on more than just the social nature of cultural activities and the problem of the *différence* that postmodern theory embraces. It examines the literary production of women that portrays strong female subjects, exposing the uniqueness of their daily experiences. Consequently, feminism uses transformative social practices related to politics, unconventional sexual behavior and the distribution of power to create new art forms.²

As Spain moved toward a modern, democratic and censorship-free society, female novelists revisited the relationship between women and society and their deficient representation in cultural life. The “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” as observed in the work of certain female writers exposes the challenges that they have had to face and overcome for daring to dispute the canon and the official historical discourse. It questions the legitimizing function of hegemonic power and the concept of a unique truth, validating peripheral voices and deconstructing the mythical dimension of canonical narratives and History. Lourdes Ortiz’s Urraca and Angeles de Irisarri’s Toda, reina de Navarra thus correct the omissions that History has perpetrated on Woman and contest the absolute principles of

society. Both novelists embark on a thorough exploration of the relationship between female representation and the literary canon.

Urraca develops as an autobiographical chronicle of the queen Urraca during the first quarter of the twelfth century (1109-1126). The main character is the queen of Castile and Leon, daughter of and successor to King Alfonso VI. The narration derives from Urraca's first-person confessions to her guardian the monk Roberto, while her son, Alfonso Raimúndez, who has seized the throne thanks to the powerful bishop Gelmírez, holds her captive in the monastery of Vacalbado. According to Vance Holloway, the importance of this personal chronicle in Urraca lies in a thematic that recuperates women's roles based on the modern novel's use of diverse subgenres. He explains how through memory and the subject's consciousness-raising, Queen Urraca tells her life and subjectively rearranges history, "la temática deriva de sus múltiples valores genéricos como novela de memorias, novela psicológica y novela histórica."³

Paradoxically, the queen's deprivation of freedom allows her the opportunity to reflect and to present an alternative vision of the past, legitimizing her actions as a queen and an independent subject. Urraca's confessions to Brother Roberto and the chronicle she writes for posterity, wherein she reviews her life and her standing in society, give Ortiz the literary means to impose her character's viewpoint. The novel has three chapters, starting with a description of the queen in captivity. Two major factors define her personality during her confinement: female consciousness and self-sufficiency. The novel ends with her last moments in prison while she ponders about the temporary nature of power. In

these three chapters, we witness how Urraca goes through multifaceted self-portrayals and self-conscious stages as Alfonso VI's daughter, as wife of Raimundo, Count of Burgundy and of Alfonso I of Aragon, as Alfonso Raimúndez's mother and as powerful queen.

Toda, reina de Navarra, is the narration of the ancient queen Toda's well-documented historical journey from the kingdom of Navarre to Cordoba. As stated in the novel, the expedition's purpose was to get military and medical aid from the Caliph of Cordoba, her nephew Abd-ar-Rahman III. She needs his help in order to put her grandson Sancho el Craso (Sancho the obese) back on the kingdom of León's throne.

Toda emerges in Irisarri's narrative as the master of her domain. Social and political control, her past, her present and the destinies of those who accompany her fall under her authority. During her journey, the queen of Navarre appears as a powerful monarch. A brilliant strategist and diplomat as well as a feared warrior, Toda does not physically hold the crown of Navarre; it is symbolically in the hands, or rather on the head, of her son García Sánchez, but it is she who holds the reins of the country.

2. Power, Presence and Social Control

Postmodern and feminist theories explore the reasons why history and fictions have created universal images of the past without including women's experiences and significance. Traditionally, a central role for women as history maker and literary "subject" has been excluded. Female characters and actions needed a cultural locus that could insure them a place of their own. Official power

has allowed them only limited space for authority and leadership; a place usually identified with the domestic. Lynn K. Talbot exposes the contrasting traditional cultural representation of men and women in her article “*Lourdes Ortiz’s Urraca: a re-vision/revision of History*”: “Clearly women have participated in the events that shaped their moments, but historiographers, guided by cultural norms, have recorded primarily the feats of warriors, leaders and conquerors, usually males.”⁴ As Talbot points out, there is a clear necessity to fill this lack of women’s activities and contributions from documented history. Feminism helps to understand how the fictional portrait of daily intimate events alters the regulatory system of women’s cultural representation, as well as the institutionalization of power.

Feminist and postmodern readings of *Urraca* and *Toda, reina de Navarra*, reveal how these writers palliate the absence of relevant female characters in historiography and literature. These literary characters present an alternative power system and demonstrate the impossibility of a unique truth. Ortiz chooses the fictional reconstruction of the character of *Urraca* because together they create an emancipation process by which self-determination and self-appreciation can be established. Through her portrayal of the Queen of Castile, Ortiz encourages her contemporaries to reevaluate the current structures of male dominated society and thus promote change. *Urraca*’s narrative defies the official historical discourse and challenges women’s invisibility in society.

Irisarri chooses *Toda* because she has already overcome the literary and historical invisibility that the patriarchal order has consistently assigned to

women. The traditional sources of information have represented Toda Aznar as an independent and powerful subject. She holds social control, political dominance and extraordinary military leadership. Therefore, Toda's depiction establishes a female precedent as a reliable model for other women's social and cultural representation.

In Introducción a la España medieval, Gabriel Jackson establishes the differences between Urraca and Toda. The historian presents the queen of Castile as a second-class player in medieval Spanish politics and a mere instrument of the established order's wishes. In contrast, the queen of Navarre appears as an essential builder of Christian Spain because of her political and social relevance. Jackson offers an image of a woman that signifies an absolute alternative system for social control. The significance of her political and military accomplishments overshadows the role of her son García Sánchez, the king of Navarre: "Toda, reina de Navarra, eclipsó a su hijo García Sánchez, y fue la figura política clave de la España cristiana durante los años que van desde el 930 al 970" (37). Consequently, Irisarri's Toda acts as a model for an alternative female subjectivity independent from male power structures.

Urraca: Self-discovery, Female Identity and the Writing of History

While Ortiz considers Urraca as a fictional character, she acknowledges that historical texts have categorized the queen of Castile as an integrative part of a disappearing act. Canonical texts have presented the queen as a marginal being in Medieval Spain. In her article "Historical novel from a feminine perspective: Urraca", Biruté Ciplijuskaitė notes the traditional historical annihilation and

negative representation that Queen Urraca has experienced: “There are countless history books which fail to mention her name. When she does appear it is usually in a reference to her rather libertine behavior or stormy marriage to Alfonso el Batallador” (33). Rejecting the historical ostracism and cultural negation that the queen of Castile has suffered, Ortiz gives her a regulating function in the narration. The author articulates women’s possibilities to achieve and develop a relevant role in society. Her fiction enhances the way in which a woman can portray her desires, her hopes and her motivations for love, authority and family relationships. Consequently, having control and power over her environment, establishing her authority in society and narrating her reality for a better self-understanding are Urraca’s three main concerns.

1. Urraca and the Historical Subject

Completing a self-contained construction, the novel starts and ends in her cell while she is confined in the monastery of Vacalbado. The importance of her role as head-of-state and her self-esteem make her narration impossible to ignore, a voice to be heard. By constructing her own chronicle, she expresses her desire to elude the realm of captivity that imprisons her and her limited representation of a woman and a queen. To this degree, Urraca avoids categorization as a traditional female “object”, stating a claim for her own space.

From the beginning, one can observe a sense of vulnerability in the queen. Urraca dislikes appearing as a weak female leader without power or control. Since she is officially out of the country’s political life, the queen counts on others for physical and moral deliverance, “Ellos saben que no deben hablarme y, sin

embargo, en sus rezos se murmura mi nombre ... son pacientes guardianes y, dóciles como corderos, serán los primeros en abrirme las puertas el día de mi venganza” (9). Although such a hostile environment might distress emotionally and physically any other individual, the first governing queen of Castile emerges from her ordeal with dignity and does not admit defeat. Urraca presents her view of gender relationships as an alternative against the monolithic structures of power. Her narrative departs from the idea of femininity as a subordinate concept always depending on male parameters for personal definition. The text focuses on her as a powerful queen and a strong character, “Nadie debe compadecer a Urraca. Todavía no estoy vencida...uno es dueño hasta el fin de cada uno de sus actos” (9). Offering the account of her life from her perspective facilitates her portrayal as an active subject in the making of history.

2. Urraca and the Chronicle: Her Personal Historical Discourse

The traditional Spanish Medieval chronicles are historical accounts of the reign of the Christian kings presented in chronological order. The writings normally maintained an ideological link with the crown, not only focusing on the history of Spain and the kings’ achievements, but also recording their battles and affirming their values as warriors and monarchs. After the Historia Silense (1115), many of the most important writers were kings and nobleman. In the prologue to the readers of Crónica de los Reyes de Castilla (1953), the editor discusses the magnitude of the chronicles in Spanish literature and considers them “monumentos más notables de nuestra lengua” (5). He remarks the importance of the writings of Alfonso X “el Sabio” who wrote Crónica General also known as

Historia de Espanna (1252), and his nephew Don Juan Manuel, who also wrote Crónica Abreviada and Crónica Complida (1310).

In Urraca, the chronicle takes a different perspective. Instead of corroborating the traditional discourse, the queen challenges it by proposing an alternative to the canonical medieval chronicle. Her discourse enables a dualistic narrative about a female character and a queen of Castile. It allows her to maintain both a public and personal space, from which she speaks, tells her story and becomes a complete self. Her discourse establishes a new historical meaning that reveals her presence and exposes the existence of a traditional segregation of female historical figures. The account of events from her point of view serves as a centripetal force that brings her back to center stage: "...y yo aquí encerrada en este monasterio, en este año de 1123, voy a convertirme en ese cronista para exponer las razones de cada uno de mis pasos..." (10). It is by intending to liberate herself from its structures that Urraca's chronicle challenges the cultural and political control of the dominant power. Ciplijauskaitė examines the autobiographical feminist novel of the late twentieth century. In Ortiz's narrative, she explores the relationships between history, the queen of Castile and her literary role. She explains that what Urraca tells the readers about her life will be a justification for her actions and a self-inquiry for female configuration.⁵ In Urraca, the queen maintains a continuous questioning of traditional social institutions. She insists on the legitimacy of her descriptions, convincing the reader to accept her words.

Addressing the reader in the first person validates the presentation of Urraca's private life. Amalia Pulgarín notes the importance of the queen's writing. She explores the reasons that motivate the queen of Castile to express her desires in life and concludes that writing is the only tool that she has to corroborate her historical role. She creates a subversive discourse that justifies female relevance in society, challenging the established conception of the past. According to Pulgarín, Urraca writes because she has a vindictory agenda: "escribe su propia historia con el propósito de ofrecer una crónica alternativa al conjunto historiográfico que de alguna forma ha abordado su historia y la de su época" (163). As Urraca becomes a writer, her narration expresses how her desires and her wishes for love shall overcome her present situation, fighting for recognition and self-awareness against society's restrictions. She considers how historians will endeavor to describe and inscribe her contributions in the socio-political mechanism. The queen considers the traditional chronicle incapable of portraying her abilities of self-preservation and her intimate and sensitive character. We can perceive how her account establishes an intertextual link between the medieval concept of fame and her ideas of historical perpetuity. María Rosa Lida de Makiel studies the notion of fame from Classic through Medieval Spanish literature. Centering her investigation on Castilian production such as El libro de Apolonio and Las coplas of Jorge Manrique, she distinguishes two models in the Middle Ages: the religious and the courtly. She explains how people seeking courtly fame are interested in being preserved by actions and achievements beyond death since it: "expande su ansia de gloria, confirma su

proyección en el futuro y hasta concede que la expresen en su propio nombre y para sus propias obras los artistas” (293). In relation to this quotation, Urraca’s words create a particular speech, adapted to her needs and feminine references, to preserve her historical role in the memory of posterity. As Cixous shows in her debate about female representation, writing becomes the ideal subversive space in which the reasons and existential values capable of producing conscious and independent female identities can be constructed.⁶ The mature woman in the monastery, who has been in and out of the realm of power, chooses writing as an act of emancipation and survival. Fearing defamation she gives her own version of events: “Pero Urraca tiene ahora la palabra y va a narrar para que los juglares recojan la verdad y la transmitan de aldea en aldea, de reino en reino” (10). In this way, the story of her life becomes a new and explicit alternative truth.

Jean-Francois Lyotard argues about the necessity of reconsidering the reliability of Western cultural structures such as the artistic and literary canon. He suggests the existence of a fallacy in the absolute conception of the world and proclaims the lack of transparency in society. He wants us to acknowledge the impossibility of History’s universality and accept the affirmation of an outside of the establishment, heterogeneous system of intellectual procedures. This process questions imposed dominant conceptions such as the role of woman in society and in history and the lack of her complete representation in literature.⁷ Urraca’s decision to write makes us participants as readers. This creative mechanism incorporates a subversive inquiring effect regarding the validity of apparent absolutes such as homogenous cultures and logocentric societies. In order to

preserve political and social power, the queen assumes control over the only tools she has available: her words and her writing. Although she believes that her discourse seems sometimes disrupted, it outlines an inestimable reflexive method for establishing female identity and for the re-enactment of a woman's story. It reconverts the societal traditional values in order to modulate those related to her nature. Her writing principles do not follow the diachronically homogeneous timeline of historical chronicle. With words full of irony, she presents a private and detailed vision of the past in which social relationships and personal experiences rule the narration on her own terms:

No es eso lo que te enciende el rostro cuando me escuchas; sé que preferirías que me detuviera y te hablara de nuevo de Gómez González, de don Pedro de Lara, del propio Alfonso [...] Te gustan las historias de cama; ésas que yo no quiero ni voy a contarte. (75)

The account of her life helps Urraca to regain the central socio-political place that she held. The queen does not open her life to the official power as an act of repentance but instead to her wider public, since the dominant order considers that what she has been, what she has done and what she has signified as wrong and subversive:

El abad se inclina ante mi obstinación y ha renunciado a sus intentos de los primeros días para lograr que me sometiera a una confesión pública de los llamados mis pecados y moverme a esa figura que detesto: el arrepentimiento. No hay nada de que arrepentirse... (9)

Urraca is concerned about displaying her subjective persona. She reflects about the events that surround her emotional and intellectual development as a woman. Since her discourse represents the ideal obtained from the new feminine speech, Ciplijauskaitė believes that Ortiz constructs a specific feminine literary

style that separates her writing from prior historical representations. The use of the queen as storyteller reinforces “the subversion of social, political and literary practice of the dominant order” (205). Urraca wants the monk Roberto and the reader to accept her words as a true alternative of the past. To this end, she recreates the values and models of exemplary behavior that make her act and think the way she does. She looks at her younger years and sees her determination to obtain the crown of Castile as an act of social challenge and counter-discourse.

Throughout these memoirs, Urraca claims justice for a feminine representative space. Paul Ricoeur studies the relationship between individual and collective memory and history emphasizing the idea of historical memory as egalitarian. In this regard, this new representative space appears as an area for confrontation and testimonies, emerging from the intervention of the subject in the formation of one’s identity.⁸ The queen recalls two major ingredients for political success and the foundation of self-esteem: power and social control. They lead to her sense of independence, to a new way of perceiving herself that originates from a reconfiguration of the traditional dominant system. This construction of her uniqueness transgresses the cultural limitations of female configuration and reaffirms her particular presence in society as well as her place in history. It is no longer (his)*story*, but rather (her)*story*, Queen Urraca’s.

Urraca and the Establishment: Transgressing Family and Power Relationships

1. The Father and the Deconstruction of the Hero: Feminine Independence and Woman Warrior

Urraca uses her memory to search for authoritative behavioral patterns from her past. In the constantly changing Reconquest, respect and influence were the main requisites to gain political power and social control, always implemented and achieved by violence. In Ortiz's fiction, the strongest example that equally represents confidence and independence is her powerful father king Alfonso VI, who allowed no room for mistakes. She establishes through her father's memories a connection between preservation and recognition. A parallel to Urraca's intentions is Jacques Derrida's analysis of memory. He establishes relationships between name, object and fame. He believes that the name is an extraordinary linguistic force that allows the object to reach immortality out of language: "we know that his name can survive him and already survives him; the name begins during his life to get along without him" (49). For the queen of Castile, her father's name is a synonym of the ultimate power machine: tough, unsentimental and without fear, she recalls him as the most suitable model to emulate in order to gain control over her environment: "Yo miraba a mi padre y comenzaba a aprender su lección; era el rey, era Alfonso VI, emperador de todas las Españas y ni monjes ni abades podían anteponerse a sus deseos" (13). The queen re-evaluates the relationship with her father while she recaptures her childhood. It helps her to understand how she should act in a world dominated by powerful male figures.

While she evokes Alfonso VI's image, Urraca reconsiders the importance of his position and influence in her life. Her depiction of her father contrasts with the manner in which others perceive him. Her first husband Raimundo de Borgoña, the bishop Gelmírez and her mother Costanza have considered him far from the idyllic monarch: "...tu padre mandó a matar a tu tío Sancho y desde entonces mantiene a su otro hermano, a tu tío García, encerrado en la Torre de la Luna" (13). On the other hand, her memories from adolescence portray a meticulous Alfonso VI as the perfect military and political calculating cold mind: "... no hay cabida en el corazón de aquel que controla los destinos de los demás para la tristeza o la clemencia, para la compasión o la ternura" (16). Urraca's recollections and flashbacks construct the king's image as the ideal source of authority that helps her search for a powerful self.

Ironically, her father and the patriarchal organization of his kingdom disregard her as a viable option for power. They do not acknowledge the future queen as a significant public figure. The military-minded Alfonso VI fails to appreciate Urraca as the rightful successor to the throne since this status has traditionally been assigned to the male progeny. The king considers her to be a valuable material possession, only suitable for a political profit: "...por eso me miraba a mí y a mi hermanastra Teresa como a dos piezas de rompecabezas, sólo le interesábamos en tanto que podíamos ser entregadas en matrimonio" (19). Placed in a controlled environment, the description of woman as an inanimate object symbolizes an act of violence. The recollections of her father's conduct

recall a diminished image of woman that denies her the possibility of complete understanding, identifying Urraca as the conventionally weak “Other.”

The queen transgresses in Ortiz's narrative the limits of the dominant system in order to express her views of historical events. As Urraca cuts her emotional and psychological ties to Alfonso VI, she subverts the phallogentric discourse and regains a sense of individuality. Psychoanalytic premises have established that each person has a deep sense of self that appears in early childhood by interactions with one's primary parent. In lacanian theory, the formation of the infant “I” as an autonomous self has to go through the mirror stage. When it is not yet an autonomous subject, the child suffers a symbolic castration since the father separates it from the mother. Right after the separation, it becomes an individual; “the child humanizes itself by becoming aware of the self, the world and the others.”⁹

In order for Urraca to be herself, there must be a process analogous to the lacanian formation of the individual's personality. She must face her multiple relationships with the king. By exchanging Lacan's terms father-infant as allies to father-daughter as adversaries, she achieves a psychological boost related to the growth of the “I” and takes her first steps toward full consciousness. She puts emotional distance between her father and herself since he represents the symbolic order that impedes her evolution to an independent subject. The symbolic separation takes place through the description of Alfonso VI's physical decay: “Cuando me llamó para proponerme que me casara con el de Aragón, nada quedaba ya de aquel luchador que yo tanto había admirado y temido. Era sólo un

viejo encogido que pronunciaba palabras inaudibles” (39). The queen finally severs her emotional ties with him to accomplish her legitimate personal and political consolidation.

In Urraca, the disconnecting actions that produce her subject development as an independent character make her aware of her ability to create an alternative discourse. The character of Urraca as powerful queen materializes in the narrative when she internalizes the capability of her father as diplomat, Machiavellian politician and fearless warrior. At the end of chapter one, Alfonso VI’s death is imminent and he dies but she keeps his death a secret from the Castilian noblemen as a stratagem that will assure her the throne of Castile. As she reflects upon her role in the future of the empire, she manipulates current events to secure alliances for her own benefit. All the characteristics that mark her father’s description as a manipulative and clever leader materialize in her:

Y así nos pusimos de acuerdo: él saldría de la corte fingiendo un destierro que tranquilizara los ánimos y equivocara mis intenciones; tardaríamos cinco días en anunciar la muerte de mi padre, cinco días que nos servirían para aguardar el regreso del conde; luego, proclamada la muerte se procedería a lutos y penitencias en todo el reino. Yo vestiría sayas de cuerda para rogar la absolución de mis culpas y las de mi pueblo e inmediatamente después haría una declaración pública de la voluntad de no unirme con nadie hasta que el dedo de Dios se hubiera manifestado. Mientras, se prepararían las bodas y, en septiembre yo y Alfonso nos encontraríamos en el castillo de Muño, próximo a la ciudad de Burgos y cerca, por tanto de las tierras de Ansúrez. (50)

Maintaining her father’s death a secret ensures a safe access to the crown and a marriage with Alfonso of Aragon. The two kingdoms’ union allows political and geographical independence and the solidification of her power.

In opposition to her misrepresented image from the historical annals, her story paints her as a woman with a set of goals and the necessary tools to obtain them. Urraca is now a voice with an original sense of self and subjectivity. She reconsiders society's traditional passive role assigned to the female subject, becoming more than her father desired for her. Present and future events fall under her domain because of background strategies that affect the construction of her self-esteem and dominance and that of Spain.

Urraca's awareness of the importance of her decisions strengthens her chances of success. She refuses a subordinate role in history. As a monarch, she gets from her father what can benefit her; that is, his power and social control: "A él le debo toda la energía que durante estos años he ido necesitando para luchar por lo que era mío" (16). Having power over her environment and the fact that she fulfills her own wishes explain her ascent as an energetic and dominant leader: "elegí el Imperio y me preparé para que todas las tierras reunidas por mi padre pasaran a mí cuando su muerte llegara a producirse" (19). The queen assumes total authority by completing a paradoxical assignment: working her way out of the system as a woman while positioning herself within the dominant institutions as a successful monarch. The critic Carmen Rivera Villegas believes that controlling the narration allows Queen Urraca to reach a moment of self-discovery that demolishes the symbolic female space assigned by the dominant culture.¹⁰ She becomes the centerpiece of a deconstructive process that inverts the hierarchical order.

The queen of Castile oversteps the boundaries of the phallogentric cultural and social order, moving away from the court and ending up in the battlefield. Her image as a keen warrior deconstructs Spanish mythological discourse. She subverts the conventional binary oppositions such as male/female, active/passive and subject/object that maintain the cultural and social status quo. Her physical description as a military ruler defies the myth of the historical separation of roles in society and reveals it as a form of cultural imperialism that undervalues the non-traditional entities of society, “fui guerrero, apenas desmonté del caballo, y mis ropas olían a polvo y a sudor y no a ungentos perfumados” (38). With rage and melancholy, she actively challenges the validity of the existing literary and historical sources of information that have undermined her persona as a woman and her authority as a queen. Her chronicle shows how aggressiveness and military skills normally associated with a mighty conqueror also apply to her:

Yo no he amasado el pan, ni he limpiado los garbanzos para despojarles de su piel, ni he cosido mis sayas, ni he tejido mantas que cubren mi cama. Estas manos sólo han sostenido la espada y han lanzado el dardo con precisión, con tanta como mi esposo cuando la empleó contra Pardo. Son manos que sólo supieron golpear el tambor, con rabia, para revivir una música guerrera. (140)

She has the characteristics of the conventional hero, his uniqueness, and presents herself as more than capable of executing her role as a powerful monarch.¹¹ With the sword and the dagger in her hands, she controls the transgressive speech that confirms her female authority. Violence, intensity and a peculiar fury in her words increase the perception of her subversive attitude against the dominant system.

Urraca's new configuration as an uncanny fighter separates the archetypal conception of the conqueror and her. The heroic features that she

appropriates are re-designed by her female perspective and fulfilled with more internal, treasured and cloistered connotations:

Yo sólo luché por conservar lo que por derecho me correspondía, nunca ocupó mi tiempo el modo de conseguir más botines, nuevos tributos, y en cambio a mi alrededor he visto enloquecer a los hombres, amasar más riquezas o acumular más tierras. (129)

With the description of men's unrestricted materialistic ambitions, the queen deconstructs the established cultural legacy of dominant power. First, her story shows a new concept of the ruler through the emasculation of Alfonso VI's attributes as a model for social and political authority. She constructs her own image as that of a sensitive, yet aggressive monarch with a political agenda to implement. Second, she defies heroic national figures such as the Cid Campeador, the historical and literary warrior's prototype of the Spanish Reconquest.

Roland Barthes characterizes myth in Western societies as an ideological tool related to its universalism, its unalterable and hierarchical vision of the world and its unilateral viability.¹² In Urraca, the Cid Campeador does not coincide with his usual image as the national icon of the Reconquest.¹³ Instead, the narrator completely transforms his historical significance. She does not assign to him the traditional hero's qualities of loyalty, friendship and the pursuit of truth. Rather, Urraca parodies the mighty warrior as a disgraceful mercenary:

Como Rodrigo Díaz, un mercenario sin escrúpulos, dispuesto siempre a valerse de la palabra divina para aumentar sus bienes y para compensar la frustración que le producía estar alejado de la corte. Rodrigo era un guerrero sin espíritu, de esos que provocan envidia y tiranía; un soldado metido a gobernante. (129)

The negative expressions "mercenario sin escrúpulos", "guerrero sin espíritu" and "envidia y tiranía" shed light on her authority as another type of chronicler and

reveal her historical and canonical breakthroughs. Urraca's self-confidence and intellectual attributes consistently exceed the Cid's: "amé el Imperio, como debió amarlo Rodrigo, y tal vez lo único que me diferenció del mercenario es que yo, por herencia, creí tener más derechos y tuve más oportunidades" (139). This literary description demolishes the mythical figure of this Spanish hero by contrasting her representation of herself from that of the male hero. The opposition between a glorious and courageous female warrior and a disfigured champion allows a revealing and supplemental model for conceptualizing her individuality, a basis for a different understanding of her story and of her achievements as a queen. This creates a range of possibilities for other readings of women's cultural representation.

2. The Mother: Woman, Body and Discretion's Power

Ortiz's Urraca questions Women's reduced role in society. As the storyteller, she shows how and why Women perform in high public places. The queen examines power interactions in society, male/female relationships and cultural restrictions. She searches for women's own sense of identity within a private environment. She subverts the temporal and chronological referent of history in order to revamp its untraditional and particular features. The queen portrays her actions, her thinking and her perspective to denounce for herself and for the readers the myths that sustain the patriarchal system. By her own strength of mind, she appears as an alternative to political dominance and social control:

Elegí ser reina y no cabían Zaidas dentro de mi piel, porque yo no sabía ser Zaida sumisa, reposo del guerrero, un cojín dorado donde reposar la

cabeza, ya que yo, por mi parte, tenía la mía que en ningún momento dejaba de funcionar. (184)

She chooses the way she lives together with the responsibilities and decisions that affect her final success. In spite of the obstacles raised by Alfonso VI, Bishop Gelmírez and her husbands, her intellectual capacity confirms her personal point of view as a means for independence, self-determination and self-representation, like that of men.

Through the novel, Urraca challenges the historical oblivion that woman has suffered. Wielding her body as an instrument of social rebellion, the discovery of her sexuality's relevance ignites a new transgression process that helps her obtain her goals and symbolically overcome the restrictions that women have to face during their lives. Both her body and sexuality become transcendental tools that destabilize society's equilibrium.

We now have to consider that the narrative produced in Spain until Franco's death has restrained the idea of women controlling their own bodies as a symbol of their independence. They have not developed as subjects outside the mainstream of power. Critics agree that contemporary writers such as Ana María Matute, Carmen Laforet and Elena Quiroga who tell stories about women, did not accomplish the full and free representation of female characters. These authors had to deal with and counteract narratives of the Franquist regime that offered passivity and submission as an official and unique role for women.

In Ortiz's fiction, Urraca uses her body and sexuality to express the complexity of feminine identity's formation. She finds in her mother Constanza's behavior and *modus operandi* an additional strategy to succeed in her quest for

the control of the Empire. She adds Constanza's conduct and methods for control and self-preservation to those assimilated from Alfonso VI's views about authority and social power.

The significance of Constanza of Bourgogne in the queen's life evolves through her recollections. As a stranger to the land of castles, she also lives emotionally incarcerated in an unknown world. She subsists isolated in Medieval Spain surrounded only by the loyal and sympathetic Obispo Gelmírez, the abbot Bernardo and the monks of the Cluny order from beyond the Pyrenees. Urraca's mother is incapable of understanding the principles of the Castilian society. For her, rudeness and toughness are the trademarks of Spain. From a conversation that Urraca recreates between Bernardo and Constanza when in Toledo, one observes an intentional gap between the French queen and herself. Her mother appears unsatisfied by her husband's indifference: "—Aguardad Bernardo, todavía no es el tiempo—murmuraba mi madre y se tragaba en su altanería, sus despechos, sus noches de esposa mal casada" (13).

Foucault discusses the relationship between sexuality and power throughout the history of Humanity. He makes evident a new quality of this equation: sexuality is by far a more positive product of power than power was ever a repression of sexuality.¹⁴ We can apply these ideas to our analysis. Characterized by the use of her body to survey the unfriendly milieu in which she lives, Constanza's figure evolves and helps Urraca to understand the complexity of her image: a symbolic reconciliation and union between mother and daughter through the recuperation of her true identity as a woman. Beyond time and space,

past and present, a single distinctive feature can no longer identify the female character. Rather, her maternal image revitalizes the feminine medieval representation. Constanza's idiosyncrasies and her particular approach to the social status quo is what the queen of Castile intends to assimilate for her own political agenda. The pitiful passive image of woman can no longer represent her mother: "Constanza no era tan débil como yo había pensado, pero sus armas eran los rezos, las jaculatorias y la coquetería sabiamente administrada" (17).

Urraca has discovered in Constanza's gestures an emotional and physical mechanism to defy a restrictive world. She becomes a psychological source of inspiration for her daughter's repertoire. Her combination of piety and seduction turns out to be a resilient alternative weapon to gain and exercise control over an antagonistic establishment:

Constanza había conseguido dominar la voluntad de mi padre [...] y desplegaba una languidez que desconcertaba a mi padre y le obligaba a respetarla...: la sonrisa que sabía ser oferta aplazada, el lecho abierto cuando conviene y esa dulzura no agresiva que a todos tranquiliza. (18)

The words of the queen of Castile show sympathy and respect toward her mother. Manipulating wisely the traditional feminine seduction tools, "la sonrisa", "lecho abierto" and "dulzura", Constanza's depiction positively reconstructs the feminine subject. Before Zaida, her mother's Moorish substitute in Alfonso VI's bed, it is from Queen Constanza that Urraca first discovers feminine astuteness.

The combination of the apparently conflictive characteristics, masculine and feminine, from Alfonso VI and from Constanza, are the source of the queen's construction as a determined and multifaceted subject. Urraca's ultimate goals are authority and domination, the desire to reign. The first time that these two

perspectives commingle, we see the queen utilizing her femininity to influence the situation for her own benefit. As a young princess, she used to fence and was constantly beaten. Once, she decided to take a different approach by simulating fatigue. What Constanza did as a controlling invitation to sexual joy, “lecho abierto”, Urraca did when she untied her corset’s laces. At that moment, she realized the weakness of her opponent, moving forward and defeating him: “...y a partir de ahí supe que si yo era capaz de aunar el rigor de mi padre con el saber hacer de Constanza, no habría nadie que pudiera entreponerse en mi camino hacia el imperio” (19). Playing the assigned docile role of a fragile subject does not disgrace woman’s subjectivity. The queen realizes that using her sexual attributes can also benefit her social and political position and the control of her destiny. They help her to take the initiative and reject the image of woman as passive bystander, becoming a reference for present and future women. Her sexual manipulation is a mechanism to challenge the fixed structures of the dominant order. The symbolism is obvious and unique: Urraca played a game, a metaphor for war, traditionally assigned to men. She disregards male authoritarian rules of engagement, facing the match with her mother’s weapons. She ultimately overcomes, conquers and dominates her opponent and, by extension, the society to which she belongs.

3. Brother Roberto: Seduction, Religion and Social Control

Aside from the relationship with her father, Urraca faces another intimate encounter where she defies conventional politics and social life. Out of all her

sexual affairs, the most appealing and shocking is her seduction of the monk Roberto.

By this sexual subjugation, the author endows Urraca with a method to subvert woman's submissive role. The cleric initially represents the cultural obstacles that motivate the writing of Urraca's story and above which she wants to rise. He symbolizes the patriarchal discourse that controls the depiction of the past and the religious hierarchies that suppress independence for women. As a way to maintain her status quo during her captivity, the queen overpowers Roberto and at the same time, she questions the cultural foundations of Medieval Spanish society.

Roberto's place in the queen's life is peculiar and variable. The monk remains a constant paradox, changing from enemy, to ally, to lover and finally, to her equal. We can remember that Derrida displays a questioning mechanism that demonstrates the invalidity of an absolute truth. He clarifies the impossibility of explaining the existence of a stable dominant discourse due to the multiplicity of meanings.¹⁵ There are neither fixed communities nor immutable individuals, but rather oscillating significances that destabilize society's political and intellectual structures. As a literary character, Roberto's evolving qualities demonstrate the impossibility of portraying a unanimous and transcendental certainty. The monk's description enriches Urraca's transgression. His dichotomy strikes at the foundation of the homogeneous system threatened by the queen of Castile.

At the beginning, Roberto is a part of the system and the key to her freedom. Apparently, the monk represents pure power since he controls the

queen's well being. In her cell, Urraca does not have much use for him, except to have him as the passive listener and instrument of her will to vindicate her image. While revealing her story to the monk, she organizes her thoughts and liberates herself from the limitations of the written words, "... y como si la escritura no fuese suficiente, le pido que se quede y le hablo de Gelmírez, y él se estremece al oír su nombre y se santigua" (21). Living in a world of socially imposed ignorance, Roberto enters her life as a naive character barely aware of the world outside the monastery. His presence is characterized by a combination of sympathy and disorder, causing a new configuration of her writing, "Estoy fatigada y ya no sé lo que digo. Son ya muchos meses de encierro, demasiados, y tu inocencia introduce un desorden en mi relato...." (75). From this enclosed environment, the queen and the monk construct a new relationship thus rearranging the binary opposition "I/Other."

The daily contact between the storyteller and the innocent listener creates a transferring effect. Urraca and Roberto experience an emotional conversion brought about by the queen's story. The relevance of her writing is related to the role of the reader since both are integrative elements of the creative method, "Mientras hablo para el monje pienso en la escritura, sueño con mi relato. Escuché un día que las historias deben reconstruirse, y yo recompongo mi origen para el monje..." (57). The monk's transformation from his introduction as the queen's personal attendant, "El hermano Roberto se demora cuando me sube la comida" (21), to her faithful equal since he would apparently continue her redeeming *opus magnus*, "De este modo quisiera yo, Roberto, que tú completaras

mi crónica, introduciendo la metáfora, jugando con las palabras” (190), becomes a transcendental feature in her subversive story. An enlightening symbiosis takes place between the events that she recounts for Roberto and the feelings and perceptions that she conveys to the reader thus constructing the relevance of the historical figure that Ortiz’s Urraca creates.

Roberto understands the secrets of life through Urraca’s cultural activities and private experiences. She tells the monk public events that affected her reign as well as personal anecdotes of her past and, in so doing, she builds a unique friendship with him. Although the narrator asserts her authority over Roberto for self-preservation, her condition of dependency brings Urraca emotionally and spiritually closer to the monk. Their association turns out to be her particular cathartic remedy for her solitude: “Te necesito a tí para que me escuches; no puedo pasarme ya sin tu sorpresa y tu ignorancia, y sin tu habilidad para tallar la flexible rama del álamo. Merced, amigo, no me dejes sola” (106). The queen’s daily communication with him transforms the equation guardian-prisoner. The monk is a captive audience fascinated with her story. His candid acceptance of her narrative allows her to transmit a particular viewpoint of Castilian history.

Corporal dominance over Roberto starts by means of a verbal seduction. The intimate accounts of her life begin to appeal to his appetite for forbidden sexuality. With a rising dynamic of textual stimulation, her explicit sexual behavior contains details that will seduce the monk. Communicating her experiences to him increases the importance of her historical and literary role beyond the prison walls.

The sexual conquests of the queen of Castile are her tool for achieving temporal social control. The portrait of a powerful Urraca with multiple lovers such as Don Pedro de Lara, Gómez González, Alfonso of Aragon and Bishop Gelmírez combined with the different sensual descriptions taken to the smallest details brings the monk down to her personal domain:

¿Te acuerdas, allí donde te encuentres, Gómez González, de aquellas tardes, cuando a los dados os jugabais la cama y la reina? Yo os necesitaba a los dos. Por un lado gustaba de bendecir tu cuerpo, de detenerme en tus caderas, de cosquillear tu espalda alargada de adolescente sin madurar; pero quería también la petulencia y la seguridad de don Pedro, su fuerza, su impertinencia, su abrazo inventivo y prolongado... (43-44).

The complexity of Urraca's sexual preferences creates an atmosphere of feminine hegemony. The depiction of the queen indicates a defiant alternative to traditional female images. She confronts moral restrictions in order to rise above the limitations of the patriarchal system.

In spite of the fact that, in terms of her society, the monk represents the dominant gender and the Church, Urraca controls and manipulates him, reducing his capacity to think without restraint. With her story, the queen commends her lover's memory, displaying him in sensual imagery that makes Roberto falls under her spell: "aquel que quisiera tener ahora aquí conmigo, como te tengo a tí monje, aquel por el cual abro mi boca y dejo que el aire penetre dentro, que me golpee, que me azote para ver si en la brisa vuelve algo de su suavidad, de su dulzura" (42).

Frederick Jameson emphasizes the existence of an aesthetic view of the cultural dominant order and talks about existing forces that tend to repress

particular representations of alternative cultural articulations and their active components.¹⁶ The monk epitomizes the dominant culture that reinforces the illusion of a unique truth. He exists in the specific form of a legitimizing process, an ideological support for the forces of power. The seduction of the monk thus transgresses social and religious codes. Urraca's sexual dominance of Roberto jeopardizes the foundation of society's laws, dismantling its values, its moral position and its emotional limits: "Bien; por fin ha sucedido. No ha sido demasiado gratificante, pero me ha traído calma. La carne blanca y sin vello de mi monje me ha traído las huellas de otros cuerpos...cuerpos que regresan como vapores, trayendo olores, tactos..." (117). The monk is displaced to a secondary level of legitimacy. His moral descent and violation of his chastity vows suggest Urraca's emotional and cultural victory.

In this sexual encounter, we can see a symbolic representation of what Hélène Cixous calls the concept of the "gift" in an economy of giving; art, games, war and perverse sexuality are not reducible to the classical economic balance between production and consumption. The giver does not expect anything in return. These activities present the ineffectiveness of an emotionless view of human reality. The idiosyncrasy of giving is characteristic of an alternative female writing.¹⁷ Urraca's success reiterates her position as provider and not a recipient of pleasure:

Para él ha sido bueno y a mí me ha dejado un sabor poderoso cargado de imágenes...No podía dirigir, sin herirle, sus tanteos de principiante; no supo complacerme, pero me siento bien, como si el deseo se hubiera alejado ya de Urraca, y fuera la ternura lo que esperaba de este encuentro, el dar el goce. (118)

Roberto's conquest means the deconstruction of the hierarchical foundations of society. Her sexual accomplishment corresponds to a dynamic havoc of the patriarchal order, reducing the basic values of ethical behavior and inverting the male/female power relationship.

Roberto's desire for knowledge and experiences is a sign of Urraca's emotional and cultural liberation. The queen's account of personal and public historical events, her chronicle, expunges the restraints imposed by the official system. With her words, she manufactures an alternative discourse that portrays her as an extraordinary woman, exceptional warrior and powerful force of nature. They reinforce her role as an influential historical figure. The monk makes contact with the outside world via the queen, re-enacting her life's events. Her experiences follow his initiation ritual. Memories and passion are to Roberto what political control and social recognition are to Urraca. Telling her alternative vision of the past includes sharing emotions and intimate details of her life, a presentation of history from a new perspective:

¿El conde de Candespina?-preguntas y sé que en tu curiosidad hay además presentimientos. Te pareces a él, monje. Sus manos como las tuyas, largas, no desgastadas por el trabajo y apenas por las armas, aprendieron a recorrer mi cuerpo y a darme ese placer que casi nunca da sorpresas, pero que siempre es certero. (41)

Roberto is concerned about historical events that take place during her rule. The queen of Castile is reordering and rewriting her unique vision of history while she confides her sexual indiscretions to him. Her story reinforces her importance as an alternative gender against the privileged one:

-¿Y el de Lara?-dice y yo sé, a través de su pregunta, de su vacilación, de sus ojos hundidos, que él conoce la historia, que quisiera saber de los

amantes de su reina, de aquellos amigos que lucharon juntos por sostenerla y rescatarla; que sabe de aquella traición y aquella encerrona en el llano de la Candespina, donde don Pedro de Lara abandonó al conde, cuando ambos luchaban por mí, frente al ejército de mi esposo. (44)

The careful reconstruction of her memories offers a new perspective of the outcomes of a historical episode, the battle of Candespina. Although it may be possible that she would have already told Roberto about this particular incident, Urraca ironically uses the monk's apparent knowledge of her desires to explain the circumstances that surrounded the clash between her lovers Gómez González and Pedro de Lara. The remembrance of the death of Gómez González produces the melancholy of a hazy love-hate relationship with herself. Self-accusation and self-deprecating feelings reveal a conflict between the emotional approach of her actions and her incapability to alter the past.

The evolving process by which the monk goes from guardian to subordinate and then equal validates the female discourse. It confirms her as the creating factor of the historical production. The queen of Castile develops her chronicle to advocate for pluralism in morality and politics, undermining social and literary control systems. Her presence as narrator and writer strengthens the construction of female literary independence. A woman's image is no longer a reflection of male discourse; it has its own space.

Urraca, Taboo and the Outcast: Subverting Patriarchal Identity's Conventions

1. The Outcast in the Middle Ages

Western societies have identified "Otherness" in terms of unconventional faith, social and sexual orientations, and ethnic peculiarities. During the Middle

Ages, Jews, heretics and homosexuals were disgraced figures that continuously altered society's homogeny. Ruth Mellinkoff has studied how medieval artists applied pictographic motifs to categorize and alienate those known as outcasts. The author examines the prejudiced approach of Christian culture toward these pariahs, the treatment of distinctive personal characteristics such as behavioral patterns and corporeal features. This process became the foundation for their negative configuration.¹⁸

Within her autobiographical chronicle, Urraca develops a transgressing agenda that deconstructs the conventional gender and ethnic stereotypes of the patriarchal order. It destabilizes historical and literary limitations that affect female representation. Her discourse incorporates the outcast, the unknown and the taboo-like social realms in order to establish a system of values that authenticates the feminine subject. Poncia the witch, Cidellus the intellectual Jew and her second husband Alfonso of Aragon signify clashing complexities that affect the practicality of society's cultural structures. The transcending effect of these characters facilitates Urraca's growth as a unique individual.

The quest for an integrated subjectivity that takes shape in narratives written by and for women is an attempt to overcome the character's traditionally perceived physical and mental limitations. This incorporation and recognition process rejects arranged restrictions, allowing the female subject to reach her optimum capability. Urraca has to transcend the concept of a historically annihilated character in order to fulfill her own distinctiveness.

2. Poncia: Witchcraft and Knowledge

In order to maintain a cultural challenge that helps Urraca's depiction as a conscious female subject, Ortiz turns to characters that support forbidden behavior, deviant from the status quo. As the queen's portrait deals with social struggles and power variations, the author assimilates the feminine subject's concept that Poncia, the witch, offers, thus rejecting a woman's representation as it appeared in the male-dominated canon.

The mythical experiences in Muxía, a city by the Atlantic Ocean pounded by cold rain, allows Urraca to introduce Poncia to the reader. The significance of the witch in the queen's life implies a ritualistic transformation of her personality:

Y yo regreso a aquel momento, aquel convencimiento... Si hasta entonces la idea de poder y de imperio, bajo el influjo de mi padre, había permanecido aletargada en mi corazón, desde aquella encerrona sobre las rocas blancas de Muxía acepté que los cielos o los infiernos estaban de mi lado y aquella pequeña cicatriz rectangular era el sello que ratificaba una lejana convicción. (57)

The wise old woman comes as a rising influential force that modulates the reigning capacities of the adolescent princess. She also represents conditions necessary for the alternative discourse to reach power through untraditional channels. Poncia celebrates a heretical initiation ceremony that transgresses established religious teachings and philosophy; it appears as a symbolic passage from childhood to womanhood, breaking the restrictions that have controlled the formation of Urraca's individuality. As a part of this mystical ritual, Poncia places her in a stone boat and the "Santa Compañía", a spiritual representation of dead knights holding small wax candles, magically encircles her body. In this ceremony, Urraca emblematically receives knowledge of her confirmation as a

queen and a dominant character by magical incantations: “Poncia me hizo tumbar sobre la barca de piedra ... Poncia colocó sobre mi pecho una pata de oca... Antes me hizo mascar aquellas hierbas ... desde aquel día me supe la elegida” (56). She abandons her subjugated state and becomes the locus for female social redemption.

As patriarchal society considers her as marginal, the symbolic rite assists Urraca to understand her uniqueness as a feminine subject. It is a part of her story, a new beginning, and of her development as self-confident subject. At the age of twelve, the queen of Castile faces a mythological journey in which few women have embarked before her. It alters her perception about her relationships with the world, with power and political control and with herself:

El surco en mi piel fortalecía y reavivaba mis más profundos deseos; aquella ceremonia sobre aquellas rocas que año tras año he vuelto a visitar, fue el espaldarazo que vino a confirmar lo que dentro de mí se había gestado y sirvió para que asumiese como un reto la promesa que me brindaba una corona y un reino. (58)

Poncia nurtures the soul of the young girl and affirms her future reign by distancing Urraca from the traditional way to accomplish authority and social control.

Linda Hutcheon elaborates a notion of Postmodernism that rejects the unity of expression and destabilizes absolute ideological values such as those related to the father, the State and the human subject.¹⁹ Poncia could be defined according to these principles as the perfect character that comprehends the true meaning of alternative discourse. She symbolizes the supernatural that threatens the dominant order’s fundamental premises, criticizing convictions that rest in the

simplest utterance. For Urraca, the witch is an integral element in her narrative as a counteracting speech. She questions conventional principles of object, subject and society, surpassing the traditional parameters assigned to women; such as docility and complacency: “Poncia canturreaba mientras caminábamos hacia las rocas; iba descalza y me hizo descalzarme; abrió el zurrón y comenzó a mordisquear unas hierbas. La luna se abrió y supe que habíamos llegado al fin del mundo” (55-6).

The unknown represents information, ideas and principles from outside the reasoning of society. It typifies a behavior that finds its definition in the emblematic initiation ritual performed by Poncia. Urraca transcends the traditional subordinate description of woman by incorporating into her personality supernatural strength. The knowledgeable and emotional mental bond between both women serves as a mechanism for reconsidering matriarchal relationships. There is an emblematic link between Urraca and ancestral female powers, represented by archaic forces, during the symbolic offering: “Poncia me ungiera como única sucesora en la tierra de la gran reina madre, la inmortal, aquella que a través de las aguas desembarcó en Munxía” (56). The ritual becomes a paradigm for social confrontation. Virginia Higginbotham suggests the existence of a spiritual process by which the queen of Castile’s self-esteem and energy become the necessary elements for her transformation. Higginbotham explains that understanding her role as a queen while she embraces the old woman’s teachings is a metaphor for an alternative wisdom associated with matriarchal traditions.²⁰

The union of the universal matrilineal ancestry and Urraca's female awakening thus confirms the restoring of her historical representation.

The alliance between Urraca and Poncia facilitates her story's point of view and solidifies her emerging subjectivity. Battling against antagonistic surroundings, she postulates her preference for untraditional knowledge as her particular persuasive justification for social and political legitimacy:

Poncia tuvo fe en mí y yo desde aquel día confié en ella, y su confianza desencadenó esa voluntad y esa energía que tanto me ha ayudado, y por eso la conservé a mi lado, y una y otra vez, recurrí a sus conjuros, para que sus pronósticos siguieran confirmando y bendiciendo cada uno de mis propósitos. (58)

The mystical and untraditional acquisition of knowledge serves to re-encode the culturally imposed female position. The alliance between the queen of Castile and Poncia turns out to be an indispensable instrument to shelter woman's subversive ways of transcending the limitations imposed on her by a phallogentric society. It authenticates her story as the account of a different power base, opposed to patriarchal laws and dominance.

With the use of the proscribed wisdom of Poncia, Urraca possesses an intimidating mechanism that questions and defies woman's historical alienation. It deconstructs the cultural proclamations that have negatively characterized female subjects as subservient objects.

3. Cidellus, the Jewish Doctor

In addition to Poncia, her father's Jewish doctor Cidellus also personifies an alternative discourse. His intellectual astuteness strikes at the foundations of the Christian dominant system, incorporating a traditionally alienated voice of

Spanish history. Since Cidellus teaches Urraca about the power of intellect, he signifies a new way to transcend the depiction of woman as a peripheral character.

In Ortiz's narrative, the relationships between the characters in control of their actions and those who alternate in and out of power become noticeable at the levels of self-esteem and their capacity for acquiring knowledge. Throughout the novel, Urraca's father Alfonso VI has held uncontested political power. Her mother Constanza has had power concentrated in her peaceful soul and seductive mind. Her mentor Poncia has exhibited a primal and intuitive power. Cidellus represents an indispensable feature for the development of her chronicle. He endows her with the most appealing power: writing as an intellectual mechanism that will validate her particular perspective. The personal physician of Alfonso VI is a significant forbidden instrument to Urraca. He is essential for breaking up the premises of phallocentric discourse. The vital information that he supplies helps her to revitalize her image and to defeat the repressive cultural forces that placed her in a marginal space.

At the same time, the Jewish Cidellus epitomizes a discriminated minority, highly distinctive in Spain's literature and history. Against the conventional derogatory depiction of Jews, Cidellus appears in Ortiz's narrative with a great intellectual competence and an accessible personality: "Era un hombre sabio, Cidellus, y grata su imponente figura de patriarca en aquellos días que me permitía acompañarle a su casa, y me mostraba sus frascos y retortas" (153). His father-like-figure materializes out of the standardized realm of power. The

dominant system no longer organizes his discourse. It exemplifies a substitute for the historical utterances that have overproduced his image as a subjugated voice.

In opposition to the relationship that Urraca had with her father, Rivera Villegas emphasizes the symbiotic particularity of the interactions between Cidellus and Urraca. They are not established on the binominal power/struggle, but rather on a sincere learning process.²¹ The Jewish doctor confers a way to achieve knowledge, self-confidence and an intellectual means of accessing power. Defying the historical and literary register, he offers Urraca his wisdom helping her to understand the complexity of a human being. Cidellus validates her uniqueness, which is described in harmony with a superior plane of existence:

Sin embargo a él le debo un cierto orgullo de ser yo, Urraca, un universo en miniatura, microcosmos que reproduce o es, de algún modo, el todo. El hombre es la cara reducida de la totalidad, decía Cidellus, un dios en miniatura, hecho a imagen y semejanza de su grandeza. El hombre es así esa misma grandeza. (154)

We can find a useful, more recent parallel to Cidellus' advice in Hélène Cixous writings. She presents her concept of independent woman by focusing on feminine writing as the mechanism for woman's liberation. The complexity of female subversion appears associated with written words, fundamental instruments to liberate and purify woman's soul and sensitivity. The text helps to create an independent configuration for women's communication since she does not have to reproduce the male structures. It is a tool to threaten the patriarchal order and to increase her capacity for self-expression. Cixous states that:

Giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal; it will tear her away from the superegoized structure in which she has always occupied the place reserved for the guilty.²²

In the novel, Cidellus' instruction helps Urraca to achieve authority over writing, the perfect communication system between the narrator and the reader. Since the queen of Castile challenges the past with her particular chronicle, his intellectual training endows her with the necessary philosophical and ethical beliefs to control her development as a conscious subject. For Urraca, knowledge is a personal tool for her intellectual liberation, strengthening her will to achieve it: "La letra y el número encierran la energía. El poder de la letra puede conjurar la enfermedad; pero el hombre dispone de las manos y además del conocimiento" (154). Writing rewards the usefulness and significance of otherness, while transcending the limitations imposed by the logocentric system. Controlling the writing is equal to constructing a female independent subject. The calculated stimulus of words appears as the crucial catalyst for self-confidence and power: "El hombre tiene ante sí dos sendas; una es la búsqueda del principio; la otra la combinación de las letras. El verdadero dominio, Urraca, no se ejerce sobre los hombres sino sobre las letras " (154-5). He offers her the opportunity to have an ontological presence through language. The true value of writing for Urraca does not apply to a unique vision of collective events and political consequences; rather, it is crucial for developing significant structures for feminine social control.

With Cidellus' guidance, Urraca's capacity to describe what she has seen from her own perspective counterattacks fallacious female representations of the past. It renews the possibilities of an autonomous subject's presence in a restrictive and controlling society. The queen of Castile finds in his teachings an

awareness of her distinctiveness, becoming a psychological device for creating individual stability:

Y delante del papel vacío juega con las letras, mézclalas, permútalas, trastócalas, hasta que tu corazón se exalte y, cuando te des cuenta de que de esa combinación surgen cosas nunca dichas ni sabidas, cosas que jamás hubieras podido conocer gracias a la tradición, concentra tu mente y permite que fluya la imaginación. Y muchas cosas entrarán en tí gracias a las letras combinadas. (154-5)

Against the limitations enforced by the masculine *status quo*, her control over writing reconfigures the existent forms of feminine subjectivity. Urraca achieves knowledge by the combination of letters.

Thanks to Cidellus' system, the queen goes beyond the use of her sexual abilities and seductive practices. Her capacity to control words now symbolizes the combination of mind and body, liberty and order. The discovery of her new reality is equal to immortality. The historical accounts of her life will reach the reader through her chronicle, renovating permanently the cultural structures of society:

Por eso he de escribir, porque al hacerlo, estas paredes húmedas, donde se marcan las yemas de mis dedos, dejando huella sobre el musgo, se derrumban y lo de afuera penetra ... La escritura es como las olas que recomponen un todo; palabras que son espuma que se deshacen en cuanto se aíslan. (164)

Urraca will have the opportunity to speak with a voice of her own. Her intellectual accomplishment underlines her chance of re-writing woman's role of self-preservation, competing with the official historical discourse and its representations.

4. Alfonso of Aragon, Homosexuality and Female Voice

Urraca again surpasses the literary and historical limitations of female images by incorporating in her chronicle an unquestionably prohibited force as an extra narrative ingredient. It is her second husband Alfonso, king of Aragon, who is a challenging figure due to his sexual ambiguity. The literary construction of Alfonso challenges rigid patriarchal regulations.

In Ortiz's fiction, Urraca's desire for power and social control and her constant search for self-identity have been her leitmotif. Although the queen is determined to gain access to the throne, she is also conscious of the limitations that she has to overcome in order to reach absolute authority. She understands the significance of Poncia and Cidellus's teachings as valuable complements to her way of reaching the Castilian crown. The queen also realizes that she has to depart from the conventional precepts of society that have restricted safe spaces for female constructions. She uncovers points of resistance that confront the hegemonic power system. In order to complete her development, she borrows as a model the most divergent and outcast character, the king of Aragon.

Alfonso is an eccentric historical figure with an urgent appetite for power and culturally unacceptable sexual inclinations. The figure of the king has the effect of transcending the male dominant order, but first he reveals the queen's indifference toward moral conventions. He posits a subversive force that inflicts havoc on the established status quo as result of his outlawed love preferences:

Mi reina se merece un garañón y no un ... Todos lo sabían: el de Aragón aborrecía a las mujeres y sentía debilidad por los jovencitos; poseía una exaltada mística religiosa y le gustaba demasiado compartir su caballo ... Treinta y seis años y ni una sola mujer. (42)

Placing his masculinity in a permanent limbo from which it cannot escape, confrontation appears inevitable. Urraca marries the popular conqueror from Aragon to reach the crown of Castile, power and social control. With her husband Alfonso at her side, the queen uses an alternative discourse that conceals moral differences and subverts the ethical judgment of sanctioned sexual behavior.

Regarding Urraca's decision to marry King Alfonso, Ciplijauskaitė distinguishes a transforming practice of women's political and social image. For this critic, Urraca has the opportunity to challenge the official discourse by acting like the men in her life, displaying a promiscuous demeanor: her father and her first husband both have multiple lovers. Choosing the king of Aragon as her consort husband makes him the rebellious platform for her erotic actions. Ortiz places male characters' carnal desire into the queen's *modus operandi*. Urraca has disrupted the moral standards of the dominant order with her lovers: Don Pedro de Lara, Gómez González and the monk Roberto and now with her future second husband, Alfonso of Aragon. As Ciplijauskaitė confirms: "se sugiere ahora que una mujer que reina podría tener antojos semejantes a los de los hombres."²³

The king of Aragon's unacceptable behavior contains a symbolic deconstruction of sexual hierarchies as well as the male prototype of patriarchal society. The mighty conqueror from Aragon does not represent the pinnacle of Christian society: Alfonso's depiction is not the traditional king's image as it appears in historiography and Medieval chronicles. Instead, the narrator assigns him qualities that damage the validity of his moral values. The first sexual encounter between the queen and Alfonso is a metaphor of Aragon and Castile's

alliance. As her audience turns voyeuristic, it witnesses Alfonso's lack of the necessary knowledge to execute the act. Seeing the treaty in high danger, Urraca inverts the logical procedure of the traditional heterosexual performance under those conditions, transforming the encounter into an allegory for homosexual intercourse:

Y así fue. El sexo no se habla. Alfonso se resistía a dirigir aquella contienda y los testigos empezaban a impacientarse. Fue entonces cuando tuve un presentimiento y ofrecí mi espalda y fue entonces cuando, ante la sorpresa de Ansúrez y la rabia de Esteban, mi esposo comenzó a ser tal, aunque no resultara fácil que de aquella unión viniera descendencia alguna. (67)

For Urraca, the use of the forbidden king of Aragon means a double accomplishment. It ratifies the deconstruction of the official discourse's ethical principles, proclaiming the vulnerability of social conventions. The representation of the queen as a strong and in control female character takes shape as she reveals her presence of mind in offering an unconventional alternative to sarcastically accomplish their marriage. Urraca is no longer the subjugated "Other." The queen overcomes society's ethical restrictions while she takes the initiative in an untraditional way: "ofrecí mi espalda."

Urraca's decision to marry a powerful historical player with "unnatural" tendencies implies a political sacrifice, ensuring her viability to rule Castile. In the social realm of power, the aberrant marriage deteriorates the moral principles of society and the ethical discourse of good/evil, natural/unnatural and right/wrong, because "una boda no querida por Diós sólo podía acarrear desgracias" (76).

The identifiable use of the outcast transcends cultural discourses that deny women their rightful position in society. The presence of abjection can also

construct the prohibited. For Kristeva, the abject is the dichotomized rejected or transcended image, so through it the subject arrives at his or, in the case of Urraca, her proper place for self-esteem.²⁴ Abjection is not a stable configuration. It fluctuates and carries the relationship subject/object to a limit. Such presence overturns the essence of a society and revisits its system and its restrictions.

In Urraca, Alfonso of Aragon becomes the abject that pressures for the disruption of society's fundamental binary oppositions such as power/weakness and good/evil. The existence of an unorthodox oral sex performance falls under the regulation of transgression. Contrary to conventional social precepts, the powerful king insists on having sexual encounters while Urraca is menstruating. The culturally abject act oscillates between the symbolism of blood as essence of life and the necessity of disrupting social limitations. The abject becomes visible as the king's sexual performance dismisses the moral restrictions connected to the patriarchal order. By describing their foreplay, Alfonso's consumption of the queen's corrupted discharge, Urraca makes her audience aware of their dark sexual practices: "Y Alfonso acudía especialmente a mí en esos días para bañarse en la impureza, para extraer vigor de lo que más le repelía: la mancha" (107).

Recalibrating the apparent self-inflicted submission to her husband, the queen takes control over her surroundings by manipulating the time and place. She gains political and social command since she regulates his dose of enchanting blood, making the king an addict to her forbidden liquid. Her agenda undermines female deceptive objectification. She overcomes it by fulfilling Alfonso of

Aragon's desire. Having control during the sexual act helps her to display a powerful and confident self-portrait:

Monje, un rey sensual y gozador puede perder la cabeza por ese líquido cálido que es fuente de vida...Bebía en mí con ansias profanadoras y casi con el mismo entusiasmo con que tú bebes todos los días la sangre de tu Diós[...] prodigaba mi sangre en boca de aquel que había nacido para servir a Diós a lomos de su caballo. (107-8)

During the awkward oral sex, Urraca is conscious of her position as an active participant. Her body, her blood and her language help her in her resistance and fulfill the goals of her chronicle.

Another bizarre aspect of their sexual experiences adds an additional disturbing effect. His sexual preferences further transgress the conventional view of sex due to an extra element of his eccentric mannerism. King Alfonso is incapable of reaching sexual gratification by the traditional method. The only way he can satisfy his appetite is by means of expressing verbal disapproval; that is, making his partner feel degraded: “-sólo ese olor penetrante y agrio del amor, las palabras que como dardos me lanzaba Alfonso:-Puerca, vieja y sucia puerca...Tu reina sucia y puerca, como pretendía Alfonso, cuando subido a mis espaldas me escupía; sucia y puerca” (94-5). His taboo behavior destabilizes his position as high representative of the dominant order since he operates sexually from a place that appears peripheral and alternative. Their sexual partnership manifests itself from the perspective of gaining by losing. By putting up with his commands, the queen is able to convert the sacrifice into self-determination that serves her craving for power.

Ortiz's fiction introduces a female character with desires for power, social control and self-representation, which go along with her self-discovery as a multifaceted subject. Writing her chronicle and telling her story have been her intellectual vehicles to explain her wishes, to explore the patterns of relationships and to transform words into her tool for female resistance. Both texts offer a valorization of female representation as intrinsic to the development of the new modes of talking and writing about women. Her audience has witnessed Urraca's extraordinary transformation, as she becomes a more complex and complete character. For Ortiz, the queen of Castile is rewriting history from the perspective of revisiting the role of women in history in contrast to previously prejudiced, incomplete accounts of the past. It gives Woman a new language and a new sense of herself. One must agree with Mercedes Juliá's interpretation since she considers Urraca to be a model for women who can and must understand their past in order to lead their present into the right direction.²⁵ Urraca definitively represents the true magnitude of human beings in its most authentic dimension.

THE QUEEN OF NAVARRE AND HISTORY: TODA AND THE REPRESENTATION OF POWER AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF FEMININE IDENTITY

Presentation and Organization of Toda, Reina de Navarra

1. Contrast between Toda, Reina de Navarra and Urraca

In Ortiz's fiction, Urraca's complex configuration challenges the canonical establishment. Urraca criticizes the social systems of power, the male

vision of the world that have blocked and invalidated her. In Toda, reina de Navarra, Angeles de Irisarri presents a resilient subject who threatens the official *status quo* with historical, political and cultural reconceptualization. The writer's intentions in using her as the novel's central character are clear. The queen's characteristics make her as powerful as the most powerful males and her positive image transforms what the canonical foundation of information has designated as unreliable subjects.

2. The Historical Relevance of Toda: Text and Feminine Representation

Contrary to Lourdes Ortiz, Irisarri soon reveals how the official discourse of the past has exemplified Toda as a participant. Politically and socially prominent, the queen of Navarre played an active role in history that caused her to be viewed as a cultural archetype for other women.

In Historia de España-Fundación Menéndez Pidal, we learn about the kingdom of Navarre in a special section entitled "Christian Spain: from VIII to the XI century." Here, the historical presence of the queen in the formation and destiny of Navarre is of overwhelming importance. Her position is built on strategic alliances both within and across of the inevitable religious lines. The queen was able to achieve significant victories and conquests around the boundaries of Navarre and other Christian and Muslim territories: "espectacular victoria cristiana sobre Abd al-Rahman III tanto en las cercanías de Simancas (939, agosto 6-8) como en la subsiguiente emboscada tendida a las fuerzas califales en retirada por el paraje de Al-Handaq" (120). Toda was thus recognized as a powerful political force in Medieval Spain.²⁶

The significance of the queen of Navarre's actions transcended the geographical boundaries of Spain, and was noticeable in the rest of the Western world. European chroniclers described her as a knight-type figure with a sword in one hand and her horse's rein in the other, riding to victory over the enemies of her kingdom:

La contribución pamplonesa debió ser tan notable que los ecos llegados hasta el lejano monasterio de Saint-Gall (Suiza) se tradujeron en la pintoresca noticia que considera protagonista del memorable acontecimiento a “cierta reina llamada Toia”, es decir, la infatigable Toda. (120)

Toda's historiographical presentation is parallel to today's postmodern and feminist ideas of female categorization. As an independent and self-sufficient individual, she commands a discourse intrinsic to the modes of speech and writing of these critical theories that portray independent characters as emancipated subjects, thereby questioning the traditional forms of knowledge and power.

Toda: Power, Authority and the Portrait of Determined Female

The treatment of Urraca and Toda by historians is diametrically opposed. In her narrative, Ortiz offers Urraca the power of writing as a tool for self-discovery. Speaking of her own experiences rescues the queen from historical and cultural exclusion of Medieval Spain, and solidifies her uniqueness against patriarchal restrictions.²⁷

In Irisarri's fiction, Toda's historical image is not constrained by any phallocentric limitations. She does not have to go through the process of assuming power; she has already gained and consolidated her control over the political

environment. The queen's authority in society and over her reality has been a constant prototype for female achievement.

Toda, reina de Navarra follows a circular story line. Irisarri's novel begins and ends in a single common locus—an essential dynamic foundation over which the semantic macrostructure is constructed. Toda's life in her royal palace in Pamplona will be the initial space. From the beginning of her journey to Cordoba to her final days, Irisarri portrays an eighty-two years old grandmother who on a mild spring day in the year 958 makes a decision that changed History. Although the story is narrated in third person, it is focalized through Toda's perspective. She travels eight hundred miles and performs her final act of greatness. Toda goes to the heart of Al-Andalus and asks her nephew, the powerful caliph of Cordoba, Abd-ar-Rahman III for military and medical assistance. She needs aid to place her obese grandson Don Sancho el Gordo back on the throne of Leon and remove her cousin, the usurper Ordoño IV el Malo. The ancient queen of Navarre returns to the palace in Pamplona with her mission accomplished and she will spend the remainder of her days there.

1. Toda and the Traditional Image of Women versus the Establishment

The configuration of a self-sufficient subject and an autonomous discourse, the major intellectual paradigms within feminist theories, defines the novel's central character. In Irisarri's work, the queen of Navarre's political desire for making this journey, her last major demonstration of grace and power, catapults her to the center stage of History. Her literary portrayal is that of an influential and a self-determining subject.

Irisarri introduces Queen Toda to the readers as an independent character. By controlling the kingdom of Navarre's both in political and social terms; she represents woman's potential for authority and personal realization. While in the Pamplona royal palace, getting ready for the long trip to Cordoba with a large entourage, including servants, troops and the two kings, the queen is clearly the highest representative of matrilineal hierarchy. The invariable component in her configuration is the capacity to protect and care for every single member of her domain. Although her son is the titular king, the old queen is the soul of the Christian kingdom. Her activism and political power replaces the traditionally passive female image. With the description of her diplomatic and intellectual qualities, the narrator corroborates her transcendental role as a charismatic leader while emphasizing her personal value as a compelling human being:

Y, en efecto, Doña Teresa, la esposa de su hijo, el rey, no se ocupaba de las cosas de palacio ... Era Toda quien disponía en la corte, en Pamplona y en Navarra; en las guerras y en las paces y, ahora, debía supervisar los últimos detalles de la expedición a Córdoba, a donde se dirigiría una diputación de navarros para ver al califa y tratar con él. Doña Toda era una mujer bregada en pactos, en hechos gloriosos y hasta en desechos.(9)

As Toda is the one who always commands, the responsibility of her family, the Court, Pamplona and the kingdom's safety rest on her shoulders. In an examination of the marriage of medieval noblewomen, Esther Pascua Echegaray observes that Christian societies did not consider female subjects as figures of authority. Instead they construed women as docile objects in the following terms, "casta, bella, pasiva, subordinada al padre, marido o hermano" (141). Irisarri's portrayal of Toda overcomes the traditional medieval image, appearing closer to the concept of modern woman as a figure capable of authority. She is the one who

always “dispone” and is a competitive politician and warrior, known for her diplomatic skills in war and peace, who now assumes total control of her expedition to Cordoba.

In contrast to Urraca’s need for a personal chronicle as an alternative system to reveal herself, Toda is not compelled to rely on either an account of her life or on the male characters that serve her as a means to achieve her goals. In Irisarri’s portrayal, the queen of Navarre is officially in charge of the public and private social life. In a world where men traditionally limit women’s spheres of influence, Toda imposes her will, assuring the well being of her family’s private life of as well as her place in History:

Puesto que había gobernado en un reino de hombres, donde las mujeres eran poco o nada, salvo ella que había sido regente, árbitro y capitana ... Había dispuesto por sus cuatro hijas y por sus damas, y a todas las había casado bien o descasado cuando el bien se tornaba mal ... Los hombres habían sido otra cosa, pues muchos hubieran querido usurpar su puesto o ser tutores del pequeño García para hacer y deshacer el reino de Navarra. Y no, porque ella valía tanto como ellos; y no porque el trono era de su hijo García. (25)

In Toda, the third person narration develops as fact the queen of Navarre’s realm of power. Her voice that rises above social and psychological limitations is that of an influential and vigorous female who directs every single aspect of her life, her court and the trip to Cordoba. The narrator presents a leader with hegemonic power and charismatic personality; characteristics that allow her to overcome any tribulation she may face. These attributes function as a metaphor for the society of Navarre and its internal functioning. There is equilibrium between the two realms of her persona, avoiding a psychological conflict between

her private and public sides. Toda's powerful public figure successfully mixes the familiar and the personal, preserving the idea of the subject's multiplicity:

La reina impartía órdenes por doquier para acomodar a los animales vivos, a los muertos, las tiendas, las camas de campaña, los fogones ... Don Arias, el obispo, la esperaba para recibir la confesión, Don Gómez Assurero la seguía a todas partes. Don Lope insistía con el mapa. Pero la reina no podía asistir a todos. Además, estaba fastidiada: si no acudía a su llamada el agorador, lo haría azotar sin piedad por mucho que se ocultara. Mandaría recorrer el reino en su busca y cuando regresara lo haría azotar. Porque el viaje lo haría con o sin agüeros. (12)

Western cultures favor the self-assured speaking subject and his discourse. They support the structuring principles of order and homogeneity, sustaining the hierarchy of knowledge. These concepts create absolute speeches as the basics of logocentrism that, as Jonathan Culler explains in On Deconstruction, is "the orientation of philosophy toward an order of meaning-thought, truth, reason, logic, the Word-conceived as existing in itself, as foundation" (92). Positioned against phallogocentric discourse, poststructuralism endorses the magnitude of the difference, the pluralism and the multifunctional correspondence of one self. This theoretical approach refutes the concept of human beings as homogeneous subjects. Applied to Irisarri's narrative, we can see how the narrator describes Toda as a multifaceted subject who performs comfortably in different levels of power. First, she operates in the public sphere, the one related to the destiny of Navarre and the trip to Cordoba, showing the dependency of the male character on her. Second, she is in control in the private and household space, associated to matters of daily life such as domestic care and traveling conditions.

Toda's historical relevance begins in the chapter entitled "Camino de Soria." When she enters the province of Soria, called tierra de nadie ("no man's

land”), the narrator details the bellicose dynamism of the queen during the famous battle of Alhángenda in which the Christian troops stopped the army of the caliph of Cordoba.²⁸ The accounts of such combat dismantle the stereotype of a passive woman. Throughout the entire episode, her portrait suggests a thoughtful female that maintains her distinctiveness as a powerful and authoritarian ruler. The queen of Navarre arrives on the scene as an active figure of the past since she is the one who is actually creating it:

Recuerda perfectamente, y quizá Boneta también lo recuerde, que fue a ofrecer al monasterio por la promesa que hizo el día en que se oscureció el sol muy poco tiempo después de la batalla de Alhángenda. La batalla en la que Toda Aznar vistió armadura y empuñó espada vengativa. Donde salió corriendo su sobrino el califa ... A pesar de todo era un día grande, pues los sarracenos volvían grupas hacia Córdoba. (101)

Derrida argues against the modernist concept of myth as antidote to the alienation of modern life since the only alternative is difference, with its multifaceted possibilities and contradictions that must be situated in History.²⁹ Toda’s description of herself wearing armor and bearing a sword as she claims victory over the powerful Muslim army demolishes the mythical male aura of Reconquest. She is capable of controlling a singular space for a self-governing and consolidated identity, confirming her presence as a critical apparatus that denies the notion of absolute historical truth. The queen’s portrayal discards myth as a logocentric form of knowledge, a form of cultural imperialism that embodies, as a universal value, the social *status quo*. Her actions reject the phallogentric authoritarianism by which myth has created a fixed world with orthodox values. Irisarri’s Toda exemplifies a strong female discourse because the queen’s image reevaluates the importance of woman in the construction of national past.

Although the queen's power continuously appears untouchable, there are times that she has to face challenges that could jeopardize her political influence. As they approach in Al-Andalus, the accumulation of fatigue and mental stress make the men of the expedition feel anxious and they begin to have misgivings about the monarchs. One of the knights, the Frenchman Beppo de Arles, organizes a rebellion and publicly expresses his desire for new leadership that would satisfy the needs of the Navarre delegation. Toda soon receives the report of a possible uprising. Her actions and display of power in the face of this challenge rearrange the logocentric thoughts, concepts and values. She immediately takes control of the situation, acting rapidly and without mercy in order to contain unwanted violence towards herself and her allies. She instructs her supporters and everything falls under her authority:

No hubiera hecho falta tanta gente ni tanto cuento, porque la reina, a la primera noticia, puso en marcha su temperamento, pidió su espada, la blandió y se plantó en el centro del campamento, gritando: ¡a mí, mis leales! Y fueron todos con ella menos cuatro hombres ... Entonces, la reina, sin preguntar los descargos que los sediosos pudieran razonar, ordenó que los ejecutasen a espada y, pese a que los rebeldes quisieron darse a la fuga, fueron allí mismo muertos y nadie se atrevió a decir palabra. (135)

She commands influence and mold the male order. The ability to dominate her surroundings shows an extraordinary female force outside the patriarchal system. Operating as a resourceful and practical ruler, the sword becomes the most suitable tool to anticipate any unwanted instability and implement her assertive discourse.

The queen Toda thus demystifies the hierarchical order of medieval society. She ends the struggle over political leadership without any opposition.

As Foucault argues, power is highly exercised through the production of discourses that ultimately transform themselves into unquestionable realities; that is, they develop into the definitive forms of power.³⁰ Toda's voice consolidates a well-deserved space for female identity. She sheds the traditional representation of woman when she confronts the uprising and calls for her men. Her authority over the male characters is simply overwhelming, the rebels "fueron allí mismo muertos y nadie se atrevió a decir palabra" (135). As the narrator reconsiders the situations, she detects the problems and finds a violent yet appropriate solution: to kill them all.

Toda's reactions *a posteriori* concerning how the rebellion is put down emphasize her depiction as a brilliant and cautious leader with a complex personality. The reader perceives a new configuration of the ruler that contrasts with the medieval monarchs portrayed in historiography and historical literature as supremely confident characters without doubts and contradictory feelings. The narrator shows the queen's dissatisfaction with the performance of male characters' when faced with the uprising. By openly offering her thoughts, the omniscient narrator reveals a juxtaposition of feelings that questions the validity of her actions and the political responsibilities that come with great power:

Las rebeliones se terminaban así, como había hecho, sin preguntar, rápidamente y con resolución, para que sirvieran de ejemplo... No, no, no le pesaba. Había hecho lo que debía hacer. Terminar con los insurgentes sin preguntar y sin comentarios y porque la siguieron sus propios vasallos, si no, los hubiera muerto con sus propias manos. (136)

Denying three times the possible political and emotional impact of the rebels' execution does not undermine her political status. Rather, the self-questioning of

the legitimacy of killing these men in cold blood characterizes her position as a complex monarch. Toda's particular scrutiny of her own behavior enriches her discourse.

2. Female Discourse and the Role of the Narrator: Rejecting the Invariable "naturaleza humana." Postmodern Reflections about Woman

Within Toda, reina de Navarra, we can observe a narrative process that gives a central role to the traditionally peripheral voice of women. The omniscient narrator enlarges Toda's position as the dynamic axis of the novel. The queen of Navarre's capacity to control her environment constantly reaffirms her autonomous position in society and literature.

Toda's depiction implies a self-assured persona that coincides with Gonzalo Navajas's notion of an independent subject in postmodern fiction. This critic argues that a legitimate "I" opposed to external deformations elaborates the subject. Normally, the inaccessible masculine system of codes portrays the feminine literary character as an oppressed and always destabilized individual. Navajas believes that the exclusion of the masculine subject as an authoritarian symbol develops changing codes that reconvert the traditional female object into subject because of her independent intellectual capacity: "es un hecho significativo la aparición de la mujer como personaje que es justificable en la ficción *per se*, sin referencia a lo masculino" (29). Toda's ability to control and dominate her political and social environment, her confidence and her autonomy become a model to follow for future women. Irisarri creates a character justifiable *per se*, without the need of a masculine referent. The narrator uses the queen of

Navarre's subjectivity to transform the concept of independent authority, projecting her as a dynamic subject who rejects conventional cultural identities:

Toda, más que una reina viuda y anciana, más que una abuela, parecía una emperatriz, con tanto mando y disposición. No había hecho como otras viudas que se retiraban a la vida monjil, no. Ella había dispuesto por todos y, pese a sus años, era la única persona que daba voces en la corte de Navarra... Siempre andaba rodeada de hombres de estado. (17)

With expressions such as “emperatriz” and “mando y disposición,” Toda's image goes beyond the typical profile of women in Medieval Spain, the time and the space in which she lived. Queen Toda transcends the personal and emotional disadvantage of widowhood, by rejecting the patriarchal custom of living peacefully in retreat in a monastery, the customary option for noble women. Toda overcomes all the emotional vicissitudes of her life and these obstacles only make her stronger. The narrator leaves the reader with an image of a contemporary and multidimensional woman: she is aware of her leadership abilities, “rodeada de hombres de estado”, but also of her presence as genuinely powerful individual.

In Toda, reina de Navarra, Irisarri displays a self-confident queen capable of dismantling the binary “I/Other” power opposition. The significance of Toda links with what Culler believes postmodern and poststructuralist theories seek: a change in the unmovable discourse and the organization of the phallogentric order. Deconstruction thus denies the idea of binary oppositions of Western philosophy and subverts the dominant social structure and power system.³¹ The queen of Navarre surpasses the patriarchal system and its cultural limitations since all the decisions that affect the welfare of the kingdom and the trip to Cordoba must go through her. The role of the female character being a passive

spectator of history disappears. She becomes a forceful political actor with a decisive influence, whose voice refuses to be silenced:

Por eso la responsable de la expedición era Doña Toda, no porque quisiera hacerlo sino porque, una vez más, tenía que hacerlo. No es que a la reina le gustara, es que se había acostumbrado y mandaba porque otros de mayor rango la dejaban o no lo hacían y Toda tenía siempre en derredor alguien a quien mandar y dispuesto a obedecer. Porque a ella en la vida le había tocado ser reina. (34)

Communicating satirically the idea of holding power as a mandatory political consequence, the queen acts and operates as a centripetal force, bringing together all the potential that enhances her personal worth. Whereas “otros con mayor rango” ironically describes the passivity and apathy embraced by the antagonist masculine characters of the Pamplona court, the omniscient narrator confirms the impossibility of imposing any physical, intellectual or emotional restrictions on her. Her capacity for commanding and being obeyed ranks above any male privileged in the court since somebody always follows her orders. By providing her with an image larger than life, the omniscient narrator elevates her persona to the next degree of existence. Her power goes beyond human decisions, and reaches the level of predestination: Toda was born to be a queen.

3. Toda, Transculturation and a Dinamyc of Female Subject's Compensation

The queen of Navarre in her role as a generator of the textual dynamic reveals Irisarri's interest in feminine complexity. Her thinking and her feelings imply idiosyncratic behavioral patterns. She is at once subtle, singular, unpredictable and uncontestable, emotionally violent and rational. Toda's versatile discourse confirms her dominance in the cultural space. Her assertive

and complex existence allows her the opportunity to express rationality and impulsiveness at the same time, thus appearing as a more genuine, multifaceted and true-to-life character.

The reenactment of a woman's story that reconstructs social and cultural structures gives the queen the necessary authority and relevance to define her identity. When her granddaughter Elvira, the Abbess of the monastery of San Salvador, joins Toda's expedition, the different positions in life of these two women start to clash. Obviously, there are differences between the importance and relevance of the religious lifestyle and the life in the lay world. There are also generational differences and, of course, power differences. For these two characters, the importance of authority determines their vision of the world.

Elvira's representation in Irisarri's narrative deconstructs the physical and intellectual stereotypes of a typical nun, surpassing Toda's expectations, "Es pía, es docta, es sabia, es templada, es bella...¡Mira, Boneta que bella, que donosura" (53-4). She appears to be as uncontestable as Toda since neither of them requires male cultural fetishes to achieve their self-realization. Elvira's attitude toward the secular world and its ostensible lack of significance causes the queen to explain the relevance of the female subject in the political and social order. The queen's actions overshadow those of her male counterparts and show the actual emotive quality of her convictions. As an analogy for pure power and complete order, Toda imposes her authority over common daily events in addition to governing male structures of power. By wisely understanding her own role in the world, she acts in favor of her family's prosperity and the kingdom's success:

No es vano el mundo, Elvira, no es vano, al contrario, es complicado y ser reina lo es más. Yo hago mucho servicio o trato de hacerlo pues no siempre se puede, hija mía. Cuando acucia el moro en la frontera yo salgo a la lucha para preservar o rescatar las tierras de los campesinos y que haya pan para todo el año y que las gentes no pasen hambre y recojan los frutos que tan costosamente sacan de la tierra. (54)

Toda's behavior reinforces the relevance of the female body and the essence of motherhood. Her aspiration to be a remarkable woman and an outstanding warrior is complemented along with the affirmation of maternal and humanitarian principles. The queen is both morally and magnanimous: the community, the kingdom of Navarre and its inhabitants' well-being rise above that of the ruler herself. There is a complete connection here with what Ciplijauskaitė understands as one of the characteristics of the new feminine narrative as well as the feminine historical novel. This critic emphasizes the idea of subjectivism in which the novels are written from the "I" perspective: "prestan más atención a la vida interior que a los acontecimientos públicos. La historia sigue siendo el eje estructural pero es historia filtrada por una conciencia individual."³²

Feminist criticism promotes internal changes in power structures and in the historical and literary representation of women. It questions the ways patriarchal society has denied woman's access to high spheres of power and has stifled her innate capacities for independence. Luce Irigaray considers Western culture as a unisexual cosmos-representation that categorizes women as second-class citizens without self-expression. She denounces the patriarchal order for its lack of multiple perspectives and its total exclusion of female discourse. Irigaray believes in the possibility of reaching a particular referential system, a personal language, which can fully portray women's relevance in society. Writing and

verbal communication become the intellectual tools for complete psychological and societal integration.³³ Related to the concept of the oral exchange of ideas as a mechanism for promoting women's relevance in society, Irisarri uses the words of the queen's granddaughter and niece to assert that Toda's uniqueness revokes restrictive cultural structures. At the castle of Castro Julia, Elvira and Andregoto discuss the queen's impressive character. With great admiration, their words corroborate from their own experience Toda's importance, emphatically revealing her as an astute, authoritative and dynamic subject:

Lo es, lo es ... Es aguda, vital, certera ... ¡Ella es quien hizo Navarra! Mi madre, Doña Mayor, me contaba que fue ella la hacedora del reino, pues si Sancho Garcés lo extendió, ella lo aseguró y fue Toda quien impulso a Sancho para la suplantación. Cuando Sancho ordenó a sus tropas que lo nombraran rey en vida, ella estaba detrás ... Y a partir de ese momento se hizo el reino de Navarra y fue de gloria en gloria. (167)

"Aguda", "vital" and "certera" describe her as an influential woman and a dominant queen. As a metaphor for her kingdom, her image demolishes the patriarchal concept of woman as a futile "object." Toda's historical activism grows as Navarre's territories increase. The military grandeur and political guidance of the queen honor her kingdom, privileging and legitimizing her reality.

The queen of Navarre's feminine dynamism is equivalent to the unpredictability of human behavior, thereby strengthening her intellectual and political dominance. The narrator elaborates an independent feminine space that allows her to exhibit and articulate a process of transculturation to implement her supremacy over the public domain. In the capital of Al-Andalus, Toda has to confront an embarrassing situation. Two members of her expedition, Mimo Ordoñez and his lover Gaudiosa, are accused of stealing golden objects. The

omniscient narrator calls our attention to the unlawful side of human nature, indicating the inevitability of these immoral practices due to the complicated nature of individuals. Although the actions that she may take to punish the crime would jeopardize the political alliance between Christians and Muslim Andalusies, her decisive reactions increase her crucial qualities and help to consolidate her construction as a powerful ruler:

Mimo Ordoñez entraba arrastrado por los soldados de Don Nuño. Gaudiosa detrás alborotando. La reina, muy seria los observó, durante largo rato. Se dirigió a Don Lulu y le preguntó en alta voz: ¿cómo se trata a los ladrones en Córdoba, señor Lulu? El chambelán le respondió que la primera vez que eran cogidos se les cortaba la mano izquierda, a la segunda la derecha y a la tercera la cabeza. La reina gritó a los presentes que ningún hombre de la expedición mancillaría el honor de Navarra y ordenó que le cortaran la mano al soldado y que a Guadosa le dieran cincuenta azotes... ¿Aquí mismo en vuestra habitación?, preguntó Don Nuño. ¡Sí, aquí mismo, Nuño y con Don Lulu de testigo! (301)

Throughout the transculturation process, the queen adopts social mechanisms of the caliphate of Cordoba. Toda recommends punishment by Islamic laws to keep the welfare of the mission without losing any portion of her assertive leadership. Her set of rules and the Muslim laws support each other in view of the fact that there is neither a negation nor a rejection of either. Her subjectivity transgresses the traditional limitations for self-independence, inscribing the present conflict in the realm of collaboration and reciprocal relations. This is the portrayal of a modern woman: she is independent with ambitions and social and political desires, and has an autonomous power base and a voice of her own. The message that springs from Toda is clear: by resolving the conflict, she transcends the

limitations of women within the patriarchal order and affirms her independence, social control and autonomy.

Toda, the Narration and Desire: Orality, Linguistic Control and a Personal Agenda for Securing Power and Self-determination

1. Toda as Chronicler: the “I” Narrative and how the Queen makes History

The reader develops a close relationship with Toda through the omniscient narrator; however, there are times when the queen of Navarre assumes responsibility for the plot. In these occasions, Toda holds a speaking-position that consolidates her as the catalyst of feminine speech and links her condition with a distinctive female locus.

Taking control of communication and telling her story become essential acts for a woman's emancipation. When the central character becomes the chronicler, she is able to present the how, the when and the why of events. Her discourse adheres to the feminist consideration of “I” as the controller of writing, telling her side of the story without restrictions. That brings about, as Cixous has argued, a remarkable debacle of phallogentric discourse in favor of feminine writing that produces identities fully conscious of their potential as autonomous subjects.³⁴

1.1. The power of Chronicler: Words and Cultural Authority

Toda's observations about history and the relationships with power produce a revisionist view of the past in which the feminine voice relates diverse historical episodes from her perspective as a woman and as a queen. In Irisarri's fiction, Toda is depicted as a source of power that retains hegemony and control

over her environment. She confirms her authority to society, adjusting her actions to become a metaphor for a universal female identity.

The queen of Navarre becomes the readers' personal chronicler, producing the narrative axis that generates the plot of the novel. She refines her speech to create new expressions that serve better her paradigmatic purpose: an oral production that contests the standards of female fictional characterization of the official literary canon. By teaching and healing with stories that endure over time, she occupies the lacunae that historiography neither did nor was able to satisfy. While going south to Cordoba, the expedition stops and visits the monastery of San Esteban of Deyo where the remains of Sancho Garcés, her husband, lie. Remembering the king's final days, the moments of agony before his death, is an emotive roller coaster for her. It also awakens in her a deep melancholic sorrow that signals a healing oratory. In order for this cathartic rhetoric to be successful, she needs to become the "I" who tells and who dictates the meaning of the events of her life.

The queen uses her loyal Lady-in-waiting as the unconditional listener to validate her personal growth. Since Toda narrates her story, her ensuing spiritual and psychological purification that results is not only the consequence of an intense emotional experience. Her presence in front of her husband's tomb also causes her to appear as a reliable force that overcomes restrictions imposed by the masculine *status quo*. After Sancho Garcés' death, she governed the kingdom of Navarre in the court and in the battlefield for her underage son, García Sánchez, the future sovereign. When Toda possesses the ability to speak on her own behalf,

she shows the double impact of her duties as a political leader and as a mother: the implications of private life in the formation of a woman's individuality and her active participation in social and historical changes. At this point, we can remember that Foucault understands discourse as a basic tool for apprehending power and knowledge and for constructing every single historical entity. Assuming for her own interests the chronicler's functions, Toda presents personal and public events, the death of her husband and its political and social consequences, which allow her to become a reference point of history and society:

Y mi marido murió de escalofríos, piadosamente, en efecto, tal y como dijeron las crónicas ... Y yo, quedéme sola, con cuatros hijas, dos todavía doncellas, y un rey menor, y un cuñado corregente, Boneta ... Con la muerte del regente y con mi política de casamientos y mis victorias en el campo de batalla me asenté mejor en el trono y ya nadie osó levantar el brazo o la voz contra García o contra mí. (58)

Since social and political responsibilities automatically emerge after the death of her husband, her genuine voice creates a subversive mechanism that alters the principles by which society is organized. Her skills as a diplomat and warrior together with her policy to arrange marriage and her military victories mold her identity as a powerful subject in control.

As Toda dominates spoken production, the legitimacy of her actions turns into the most important component that structures her communication. As a strategic arrangement toward a private space, the feminine discourse illustrates a new form of relating the past that is filtered through her feelings and emotions, assuring the viability of her oral representation. The contrast between the historical moment in which she lived, the presence of new players in the

Reconquest and the fate of time characterize her narration, transmitting significant aspects of the culture and of her experiences:

No obstante, Navarra ha sufrido mucho desde que los moros ocuparon su lugar en su paso hacia a la Aquitania ... el moro iba y venía ... después llegaron los francos y los astures: Carlomagno, Ludovico Pío, el rey Fruela ... Ya mis antepasados, Galindo Belascotones y Jimeno el fuerte juraron obediencia a Don Abd-ar-Rahmán I ... y yo misma, cuando mi sobrino Al Nasir, había destruido Burgos y el monasterio de Cardeña y venía a Pamplona a marchas forzadas me humillé ante él ... pero no me sometí y poco años lo derroté en Alhándega. (102)

As a chronicler, she accomplishes a special role. Toda compensates for the lack of information about specific details of the historical characters or events when she adds aspects of her inner life to her discourse, the living memory of her time. By summarizing the stories of the oral traditions of the Muslims and the cultures from the North, the list of famous rulers such as “Carlomagno” or “Ludovico Pío” and her presence as a witness and active participant of the past, Toda becomes the voice of Navarre and its people. The queen’s words strongly affect her female entourage and readers by transmitting, gathering and questioning. Her listeners and she construct an emotional consensus of understanding that gives coherence to their constantly changing world. As narrator, she displays a recuperative process that marks the presence of a proud feminine subject through History.

A relationship between her account and the official discourse puts history and literature on an equal footing as sources of knowledge and information. When Toda controls the narration, we can detect an analogy between Hayden White’s theoretical historiographical approach and the queen’s illustration of the past. Redefining history as a fictional form of expression, White explores their intrinsic

relationships. He believes that “proper” history, philosophy of history, and literary forms of history all have the same clarifying legitimacy, representing works of imagination rather than unprejudiced reconstructions of historical events. He concludes that all past knowledge is relative to an extent that there is no firm line separating a historical text and one of literary fiction.³⁵

Toda’s subjectivity posits an organized language and an independent identity. Just as White considers the presence of literary qualities in every historical account, Irisarri’s account of the events in which the queen participated in or witnessed becomes the point where historical works and literary fictions meet. Developing a story of the past from within, Toda presents a world in which she is a fact and a consequence, the direct results of the cause and effect equation of History. Her entourage allows her to deliver a particular vision of the nation from the perspective of a non-traditional voice and legitimates her particular account that rewrites the past and brings forward her truth. Therefore, Toda is a historical paradox. As a wife, as a mother and as a mentor, the queen has experienced together with her husband Sancho Garcés and later with her son García Sánchez the dynamic transformations of medieval world. She has been an eyewitness who has observed the movements of and changes in different characters throughout her years in the Court and on the battlefield. She has also molded the kingdom of Navarre and the rest of Spain with her marriage strategies and political alliances:

Y, fijaos señoras, Al Nasir arrojó a mis parientes, los Banu Casi, del gobierno de Zaragoza, y Al Tawill de Huesca y puso a otros...Y conquistó y rearmó los castillos del Ebro...y derrotó a Ramiro, rex magnus, en Valdejunquera, hasta que plugo Diós que vencieramos nosotros, Ramiro

en Simancas y yo en Alhándega. Pero vean sus mercedes cuanto ha sufrido el reino ... El asentamiento de los moros, los emperadores francos ... en los tiempos de los francos luchabamos navarros y moros juntos ... Pero todo cambia mucho... salvo las guerras que dejan el mismo amargor y la muerte y la miseria ... Yo intenté terminar con las guerras iniciando una política de enlaces matrimoniales. (102-3)

Her narration underlines the diverse composition of the society of Medieval Spain, as an analogy for present day Spain, by reminding us of her Muslim family links in Saragossa and Huesca and the political alliances between distinct ethnic and religious groups. Toda reinterprets the conventional sources of official historical discourse as well as justify her particular approach to the role of governing. In this way, Toda conforms to the paradigmatic criteria of postmodern fiction. In addition to the charismatic description of warfare that appeared in canonical medieval texts such as El cantar del Mio Cid and Poema de Fernán González, her story also puts emphasis on emotional expressions with profound negative connotations such as “death”, “misery” and “bitterness.” The novel thus suggests that the separation between the personal and the political must be re-evaluated; that is, post-Franco “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” have to contain within them manipulation of signification and tactics of resistance.

2. Power and Female Consciousness: the Formation of the Subject

The journey to Cordoba operates as a metaphor for the path of life that human beings forge. Throughout it, Toda experienced all of the transformations that individuals undergo while maintaining her primary goal: helping her grandson Sancho recovers the kingdom of Leon.

Although historiography has portrayed Toda as magnificent queen with great power and social control, it has failed to present her emotions and unfulfilled political desires, particularly the one of absolute political domination. In the course of Irisarri's novel, the queen of Navarre advances a personal political agenda, the unification of all Spain's kingdoms under Christianity. In doing so, she compels us to reflect on the changing social climate for women in recent years. Her desires for domination channel her deepest concerns about identity and the role of women into discourse of power. They are key elements in the construction of subjectivity, emerging when social and cultural conditions influence the discourse of self-recognition and justification. As the narrative voice, the queen again assumes the "I" viewpoint to facilitate her articulated and influential agenda, the indispensable feminine paradigm to retaliate and transgress possible political, historical and patriarchal restrictions.

2.1. Toda and Imperialism

Irisarri explores the deepest meanings of representation needed to reconfigure the distorted images of women in society. The Medieval conception of the noble woman has centered on the field of domestic life; that is, providing progeny and keeping up the royal household. There were no expectations for political or military participation. Reina Pastor amply studies the constrained social role of women in medieval Spain. She analyzes and evaluates their participation in the conjugal environment, in the internal development of the family structures and in the creation of powerful lineages. Pastor's description of

the traditional predicament of the medieval female subjects, a role that Irisarri counters with her characterization of Toda, bears highlighting:

En este sistema, las mujeres cumplieron, como protagonistas de alianzas, papeles importantes para el sistema de linajes, pero papeles pasivos, ya que tuvieron que aceptar las alianzas que la sociedad patriarcal-feudal les imponía ... Debían guardar su cuerpo, ser <<honestas>>, mesuradas, apuestas y pías. Aunque se las consideraban <<menores>> por su inteligencia ... De tal manera que toda la sociedad aceptaba la inferioridad, la impureza y la fragilidad de las mujeres al menos como ideas dominantes y fuertemente instaladas en la ideología corriente, en el imaginario y en el derecho. (128-131)

In Irisarri's fiction, Toda's image continuously dismantles the traditional concept of the medieval noblewoman that Pastor has presented. On the second day of their trip to Cordoba, the queen of Navarre maintains a private conversation with her confidant Boneta about the likelihood of expanding the Christian kingdom, a motivating force in the affirmation of her identity. Throughout her arguments, Toda's ideal of conquest disrupts the traditional misogynist discrimination that has assigned medieval woman to an inferior stratus of society. Her political vision of the future creates a safe place from which she can speak, take action and develop an independent self. As a dynamically influential force, her subjectivity articulates natural forces that lie in her soul, ready to erupt in the comfort of female symbolic space. Toda presents to her lady-in-waiting and to the reader her ambitions and plans for war alliances and advantageous conquests:

García y yo con las rentas que tuviéramos haríamos una guerra tal a los moros que los arrojaríamos a la Mauritania y el reino de mi hijo se extenderá de mar a mar ... en León no voy a tener problemas. Sancho hará lo que yo le diga. Luego por Occidente no me amenaza nadie. Por Oriente tampoco. Por el sur sí que anda el moro ... pero formando un gran ejército

con los condados vasallos del Norte, unido a las tropas de don Sancho ...
Haremos una alianza de toda la cristiandad del Norte y del Sur. (38)

The queen takes on the challenge to achieve success as a creative, motivated and intelligent individual, establishing the degree of personal sacrifice needed for her fulfillment. With a sense of urgency, the queen's assumes a dual identity that oscillates from the "I" as the initiator of actions in the possible expansion of Navarre's territories to the controversial "We" when she assumes the interests of her son García.

As opposed to Urraca who finds in her father a critical model for power, Toda constructs herself as a vigorous figure that possesses military and diplomatic skills. The force that drives her desires for authority and conquests emanates from within, creating a dynamic in which the queen assumes historical relevance. In order to validate her discourse and her role, Irisarri links Toda's imperial dreams to those of the most determined and authoritative male characters. The queen's political agenda, the unification of the European Continent from coast to coast, resembles the ambitions of Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and especially Charlemagne, the king of the Franks and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, since his political achievement was still well known during her time as a result of oral tradition.

Her desires for grandeur offer a dynamic perspective of function of women in contemporary society: The queen of Navarre creates an independent personal space apt for political and social leadership. Toda freely formulates and expresses what she believes her mission in life to be. She consolidates her position as a forceful ruler through the control of the discourse, dominating the

narrative from the “I” point of view and exceeding the limits of feminine configuration: “y aseguraremos la tierra asentado a gente y concediendo cartas pueblos y fueros...Deste modo, Don García y después su hijo, el infante Sancho serán los emperadores de España...y yo el báculo sostenedor de ellos” (39). The word báculo (“staff/stick”) attributes to her the abstract moral and spiritual qualities of royal power since it describes her beyond the authority of time and space: her personal agenda will survive in the legacy of the people of Navarre through generations of kings. Here, báculo, as a metaphor for the queen, means a “support”, on which the weight of the kingdom and its inhabitants rests. This is the importance of Toda as a literary character. She holds authority and exemplifies social dominance, she is a zealous queen and a precise planner who needs and wants to have everything under control. The description of the queen of Navarre’s exists as the site of female representation in the male-dominated figurative world.

3. Toda’s Thoughts: Dominion and Control of her Historical Present

3.1. Identity and Historical Validity of Toda

Irisarri as the omniscient narrator explores Toda’s stream of consciousness to reveal her expansionist politics. The queen of Navarre establishes as her foremost responsibility the control of the social and political aspects of life. Depicting Toda as a ruler, her desires exceed the official History since the events she wants to precipitate require her presence to become reality:

La reina todavía estaba inmersa en sus pensamientos; en sus sueños de acrecer su reino ... Podríamos hacernos con esta tierra que no es de nadie y alargar el reino desta parte hasta el Duero a ocho jornadas de marcha

desde Pamplona. Nadie parecía querer estas tierras, nadie; pues ella las querría para hacer más grande Navarra ... Acaso ¿no soñaba con hacer un imperio de mar a mar, para que García y sus descendientes fueran los mayores reyes de los reyes?(126)

The queen's historical relevance requires the existence of a discourse that overpowers the patriarchal chronicle to re-encode the cultural position of women. Toda's wishes for absolute political and military domination arise from the mediation of discursive power in a signifying space between social context and gender category. Although Toda may be seen as a simple vehicle for her male inheritors to achieve power and political control, her image deconstructs the cultural stereotypes of women's in literature written by men. Through her account, she is the feminine "I" who develops the idea of the empire and energetically contributes to its expansion from sea to sea.

3.2. Demystifying the Traditional Organization of Knowledge: Feminine Speech as the Source for the Transformation of History

The queen of Navarre's discourse combines the narration of historical events with highly charged emotional descriptions. Toda's unification of all Spain's kingdoms under the cross secures her representation as an active participant in the development of the past. She appears as a symbolic feminine representation for future generations due to both the actions that she has already performed and the ones she plans to do.

In contrast with the concept of subject proposed by discourse of modernity, feminism and poststructuralist theories promote the multiple-contextualized historical subject—female subjects as a complex reality. Toda embodies the writer's interest in perpetuating the relevance of women in the

formation of the past. As an energetic character in motion, she is the model for an authoritative discourse resulting from her intellectual and leadership abilities. By adding a visionary element to her personality with the very meticulous description of the future conquest of Cordoba and the expansion of the kingdom of Navarre, the author gives the queen an intricate, manipulative, ambitious and ready-to-act self-image:

La reina anticipaba a la camarera sus planes para el futuro, sus planes de guerra: que nadie nos escuche, Boneta, he estudiado esta ciudad muy bien y solo la medina está cercada de murallas ... cuando nosotras volvamos con los dos reyes que ya llevamos... y traigamos la cruz de Cristo a estas tierras, nos apostaremos a estas tierras y batiremos la tierra llana y los arrabales ... La piedra de la muralla mide cuatro millas, la podemos derribar ... Enviaremos unas primeras tropas de vanguardia en una algará para coger a los moros de sorpresa ... nosotros vendremos más tarde, pero levantaremos en la Mezquita de Córdoba una iglesia-catedral. (192)

The queen of Navarre's plan for military action refutes the passive patriarchal image of women. In Toda's representation, a woman makes her own decisions, plans by herself and forms aspirations for power and authority. She appears comfortable, self-assured and has enough influence and knowledge to accomplish such an ambitious task, thereby establishing a behavioral pattern for her contemporaries and future women. When Toda talks about military conquest, Christianity and the future transformation of the mosque of Cordoba into a Cathedral, she fosters a powerful emotional bond that is represented with sufficient complexity to be convincing. Such a dynamic procedure positions the queen as the first person narrator, Boneta as the main listener, and introduces the reader into her psyche. This mental and emotional bond links her audience to her

actions and her euphoria, which derived from her ability to control the destiny of different cultures and peoples.

The queen's plan for building a cathedral within Cordoba's mosque, allows her to propose alternative chronological events within the narrative. Her preparation for personal and universal grandeur through the architectural changes of the Andalusian city makes use of innovative representation techniques since she conditions history with her hunger for conquest. Her image encourages feminine potential beyond historical restrictions. Historiography assigns the year 1523 as the starting point for transformation the Mosque of Cordoba into a Christian cathedral under the reign of Carlos V. In this year, the bishop Alfonso Manrique ordered the construction of the Renaissance style dome, vault, altar and arches inside the Mosque. From her literary present, the queen controls the significance of the events that have transformed the national past, developing a plan that will be carried out five hundred and fifty years after her death. As a subject advanced for her time and a clever innovator with astronomical desires for cultural eternity, she projects the unthinkable for any of contemporary Christian army or king: attacking the heart of the most powerful state and army of the time. Although Toda's plan to reconvert the Mosque actually took place a few centuries later, the fact that she exposes her desires and personal agenda to the reader helps to correct the traditional image of women as passive spectators in the formation of the past. The queen of Navarre conquers for herself and for the universal conception of women a controllable personal space, solidifying the feminine subject as a fundamental contributor to the formation of the past.

Toda, Deconstruction and Demythologizing: Male Figures, the Literary Cannon and the Female Character

Toda and the putative authoritative male characters establish unusual power relationships. The most important relationships are those with her grandson, Sancho, and her son, García Sánchez. These relationships remain within the realm of authority and political hegemony and possess different characteristics.

Sancho

1. The Deposed King as the Negation of the Masculine Voice: Parody, Ironic Expressions and Deconstruction

Toda has appeared as a complex, independent, highly intellectual and extremely powerful queen. She has been an autonomous character in control of her surroundings as a skilled diplomat and a caring human being. In contrast with the queen of Navarre's accentuated individuality, the male characters suffer here a transformation in their representation, which undermines their basic essence. The literary canon and official historical discourse have presented the male character as the foundation of the system of social and political values. This character has been the exemplary representative of the analytic and referential mode of acquiring knowledge and historical truth, defined in terms such as powerful, ambitious, in control, rational and merciless. In Irisarri's narrative, the portrayal of Sancho de Leon as a powerful and forceful character vanishes: the ancient queen of Navarra, the narrative axis of Irisarri's fiction, helps him to recover his kingdom, a circumstance that molds his dignity and his self-esteem as a king and as a human being.

As significant paradigms of postmodern theories, parody and irony serve as critical elements that produce doubts about the objectivity the official view of history. Hutcheon sees parody as a means to question and subvert the social, political and intellectual structures and official discourse of the past.³⁶ Parody appears as a distorted imitation whose purpose is to maintain a critical differentiation that is conscious, recognizable humorous. It is a privileged mode of postmodern self-reflexivity: the way for the peripheral voices to challenge the dominant ideology. Irony emphasizes disparity in order to provoke laughable responses to the absurdity of events; that is, the type of humor based on words that suggest the opposite of their literal meaning. It is an incongruous development between the factual representation of actions and the imagined and expected actions. By challenging the *status quo* through the grotesque and caricature, postmodern parody and irony question the cultural heritage assimilated to the present day and present both a motivated and purposeful speech designed to correct deformed historical and literary depictions of marginal social groups.

1.1. Sancho, Physical Degradation and the Syntax of the Active Character: Dismantling Hierarchies

Ironical and parodic treatments technically construct the character of Sancho de Leon. When F. J. del Prado talks about the syntax of the active character, he describes it as a basic element that structures the narrative universe as a microcosm. Del Prado defines the literary character as a dynamic narrative component that contains three different categories: an active character like the hero or the antihero, an active symbol or force like paternity, honorability and

vigor, and an active secondary characterization whose unique function is its contribution to the structure of the social space.³⁷

Historical sources have always depicted medieval rulers and warriors as extraordinary human beings capable of winning the battles against insuperable odds, of performing the most courageous actions and of acting with unprecedented wisdom. In this way, historical medieval figures like Alfonso VI of Castile, Alfonso X el Sabio, Jaime I el Conquistador, El Cid Campeador, and Guzmán el Bueno have been recognized as powerful rulers, astute diplomats and politicians, who are overwhelmingly skilled in combat, and with a strong ethical and moral motivation towards self-sacrifice. In Irisarri's fiction, all these characteristics connected with the typical medieval male monarch disappear when Sancho first comes into the readers' view. From the very beginning of Toda, the negative physical appearance of the former king of León characterizes his literary image. Although Sancho is the instigating force in the story since he is the reason for the journey to Cordoba, he departs from the typical conceptualization of the main active character, i.e., the archetypal medieval warrior and ruler. His description corresponds to the secondary form of characterization because his presence denies the validity of symbolic forces such as courage and leadership. As the narrator reviews the reasons for Toda's trip to Al-Andalus, she offers an initial glimpse of Sancho:

realizaba un viaje a Córdoba para ver a Don Abd-ar-Rahmán, el califa, para pactar con él y, sobre todo, para que el sabio judío Hasday curase a su nieto Don Sancho de su inmensa gordura y éste fuera repuesto en el trono de León, donde ni señores ni vasallos querían a un rey gordo. (9)

With the use of words inmensa gordura (“immense fatness”) and rey gordo (“fat king”) to illustrate his physical appearance, the narrator excludes him from the idealistic, almost mythical, characterization of the independent medieval hero. Since parody generally emerges when the writer imitates with burlesque intentions the long established features of a character, the former king’s depiction confirms a departure from hierarchical values that have defined the patriarchal system. His physical disadvantages provide here a narrative mechanism that produces the appropriate comic motifs, wherein humor targets his validity as a dependable monarch.

As the omniscient narrator exposes Toda’s thoughts about her grandson’s situation, the readers observe Sancho’s complete parodic treatment. His physical limitations define his image, making him incapable of fulfilling his basic duties as a representative of the patriarchal order. His impotence as a king magnifies Toda’s sense of abnegation. The elderly queen of Navarre, who should spend her days resting and preparing for her last journey, sacrifices the last days of her life helping her grandson. She becomes the operating motif of Irisarri’s novel, destabilizing the predetermined notion of historical medieval king:

¿Cómo no iba a ayudar a su nieto Sancho, llamado el Craso o el Gordo cuando ella tenía que ajustarse muy bien el jubón para no perder las carnes y siendo que el desgraciado varón no podía montar a caballo, ni sostener la espada y era mofa y escarnio del reino todo? (10)

Two vital elements define a medieval ruler: the horse and the sword, which represent political and military dominance and social control. Without a constant understanding of their importance and mastery over them, the monarch’s significance and possibilities for survival diminish. Sancho’s lack of political

power is analogous to his inability to control or dominate these two basic elements of his potential as a king. His failure incites a comical reaction because it increases the disparity between Sancho's role as king and his incapacity for either fighting or riding a horse in the very complex and hostile environment of Medieval Spain.

1.2. Sancho, the Impossible Warrior: Transformation of the Traditional Image of the Medieval King

Throughout the novel, the use of the humor characterizes the king's depiction, modifying patterns for male and female discourse. Such modification ultimately offers a subversion of traditional images of women and consolidates a particular female social system, reducing the masculine voice to a minimal representation. The disparity between Sancho's physical appearance and his duties as a king provokes more episodes that are grotesque. One of the most memorable ironic treatments of the king of León appears when Toda and her entourage begin the trip to Cordoba. Ready to depart from Pamplona, she becomes aware of a very intricate and significant problem: the king does not fit inside the horse-drawn carriage. Toda understands both the chaotic and sympathetic ramifications of his situation. The impossibility of performing simple tasks such as getting in the coach or even riding a horse become a metaphor that strongly diminishes Sancho's capacity to execute his responsibilities as a powerful monarch. The omniscient narrator describes the scene by the use of cinematographic fragmentation. Sancho appears in the center and the narration oscillates from one character to another without the king being noticed:

Don Sancho el Craso no cabía por la puertecilla. Para su vengüenza y la de su abuela el leonés no cabe. Ni puede montar a caballo ni puede ir a pie... Y mientras, Don Arias continúa con las bendiciones y los moros, Hasday, el médico, y Galid, el capitán, comentan con Don Lope Díaz que no van a poder salir en la mañana de San Juan, que acaso al día siguiente. Don García arroja besos con la mano a la esposa que deja en Pamplona ... Las lágrimas acuden a los ojos de Sancho y ruega que partan ellos a tratar con el califa, que él tiene perdido el reino ... Don Arias saca el palio y cubre con él al rey gordo mientras varios soldados empujan el imponente trasero. Es inútil, no cabe. Los menestrales de Pamplona rien de lo jocoso del lance. (14-5)

King Sancho thus exemplifies a formal rejection of gender norms. The ironic discourse that Irisarri uses to describe him goes beyond his social and psychological limitations, and targets the power system. Sancho's physical incapacities are instantaneously analogous to his psychological impotence, which lead us to question the fundamental legitimacy of the male system for political control and social determination; his tears and his decision to give up the kingdom deconstruct the medieval ideal of authoritative patriarchy. Since the subversive potential of parody has a propensity to neutralize the facts presented by the official historical discourse, the king of Leon looks for an undiminished ideal: his deplorable "I" demands a remedy to his situation by means of being sensitive, emotional and downhearted.

The literary transgression of the archetypical hero reaches its peak with the description of Sancho stuck inside the carriage. Two political and social forces come to his aide: the Church represented by Don Arias and the military by the soldiers. The bishop covers him with his pallium and the soldiers push him from behind. The humorous disguise appears through the actions of the bishop who uses his highly sacred, always immaculate clothing to hide the king from public

humiliation and by the soldiers who push him from behind, dehumanizing the king if he were a side of beef or a sack of potatoes. His image is further diminished because this episode takes place in full view since the people in the court of Navarre, who witness the departure to Cordoba, loudly mock “lo jocoso del lance.” The ironic portrayal of deposed king of Leon reflects how the expected viability of men disappears when the disparity between Sancho’s reality and Sancho’s potential to become a fully self-confident character seems ridiculous and pathetic. His minuscule voice only exists and operates to the benefit and magnification of the holder of feminine power, Queen Toda.

A psychological degeneration also occurs after the discomforting episode of the carriage. Following the omniscient narrator’s explanation of the reasons why Sancho is physically the way he is, there is an internal debate about the trip, the king desire’s for remaining tranquilly in Navarre with his uncle García and the role of Toda as a powerful and dominant matriarch. The moment when the reader feel the isolation, the misery and the physiological dilemma that characterize and torment the former ruler of Leon as a person can be summarized in a simple sentence, “El rey del reino perdido lloraba en lo oscuro de la iglesia” (17). Agony, apathy and powerlessness define this feeble representative of the patriarchal order in the darkness of a place normally identified with the protection and salvation of the faithful.

Barthes perceives myth as a social mechanism that intends to transform History into Nature. For him, the goal of myth is the imitation and reaffirmation of a fixed universal order and traditional hierarchies.³⁸ The figure of the obese

king of Leon parodies and rewrites the mythology of the traditional dominant order. The magnificent figure of Toda outshines her grandson because she possesses the political and cultural uniqueness normally assigned to the medieval male monarch. He is neither a provider of social stability nor a classic example of the phallogentric system. His lack of a confident self-identity, his weak temperament and his physical anomalies perpetrate a process by which the masculine voice and political control are in danger of vanishing.

The parodic representations of Sancho are persistently visible in Irisarri's novel. The humiliating treatment that he suffers in the episode of the carriage and his subsequent crying in solitude reappears in the chapter entitled "El Puente Largo del Jarama." Here, the expedition has to cross the Puente Largo. Unfortunately, the king's new mode of transportation, a transformed assault tower, falls into the river. The description of the rescue operations to save the overweight king appears as a parody of authority and social hegemony. The essentials of the male ruler's fundamental nature suffer a destabilizing rejection, which prevents him from satisfactorily fulfilling his duties as monarch:

Las tareas de rescate del rey de León fueron arduas... El judío dispuso en primer lugar que el rey fuera atado con cuerdas por las axilas para que no se lo llevara la corriente. Después mandó traer una polea que los hombres, moros y cristianos codo a codo, sujetaron bien. A la caída de la noche, consiguieron sacar a Don Sancho, como si se tratara de una res muerta. El gordo se desplomó desfallecido en las tablas del puente y no quiso hablar. (146-7)

With the rescue operation, the readers observe the presence of a new alternative discourse: the voice of the wise Jew, Hasday ben Shaprut. The feminine discourse has appeared in Irisarri's narrative as a solid and settled, powerful, and in control.

The introduction of this Jewish voice also implies a change in code system of political leadership. The traditional “Other”, represented here by ben Shaprut, becomes an intellectually superior subject who reaches its literary independence through the general admiration of his actions. The Jewish physician’s skill and knowledge contradicts the parodic and impotent authority of Sancho. The rescue operation contains external comical elements, such as the use of pulleys and the abnormal quantity of time and people employed to take him out of the water, which undermine the king of Leon’s standing. The omniscient narrator shows the readers how he has to be tied and pulled out of the water like a dead farm animal. We again perceive a dehumanizing process. This contemptuous image delineates the insignificance of the voice of the patriarchal system, casts the king as an inferior character. The power of intellect is linked to the representative of an alternative system power, the Jewish “Other.”

After the episode of the fall of the almajaneque, there is another ironic treatment of Sancho’s figure that occurs at the castle of Castro Julia. When Derrida analyzes the relationships between identity, subjects and the traditional binary oppositions of reason/instinct, strength/weakness and male/female, he questions and doubts the existence of a unique and superior consciousness because of the multiplicity of meanings that engulf the traditional binary formation of the subject. *Différance* allows the multiple substitutions of signs. Phallogocentric and hierarchical structures can be questioned and one can appreciate a deconstructive momentum in the traditional representation of the power realm.³⁹ While arriving at Al-Andalus, Toda’s entourage spends the night at this castle on

their way to Cordoba. The scene presents Sancho descending from his transport and his attempt to reach his quarters in the castle. The king of Leon's portrayal is far from that of an independent and vigorous male character. In a manner consistent with Derrida's analysis, Irisarri constructs Sancho as a victimized fallible order who transfigures the traditional code. As every one in the castle witnesses his impotence, the omniscient narrator satirically reinvents the figure of medieval king by the description of Sancho's embarrassing situation:

Los moros de Castro Julia contemplaban atónitos cómo los hombres de Hasday montaban las cuatro poleas e introducían los cuatro ganchos en los extremos de la lona, liberando a las cuatro mulas portadoras y depositaban a Sancho en el suelo, y cómo el rey destronado era alzado por cuatro gigantes negros y no podían con él. Llegaron refuerzos y tampoco pudieron con él ... Fue un espectáculo grotesco. A la reina se le saltaban las lágrimas, ¡tamaño expedición por un saco de grasa!, se decía y añadía: no, no todo es por un reino. Y vio como tornaban al rey a las cuatro mulas portadoras y lo volvían a alzar y enganchar. (158)

While applying Derrida's critical method to the king of Leon, his characterization becomes imprecise and incoherent. In that power discourses that are founded on historical constructions related to the development of subject's identity, Sancho's lack of leadership, vigor and energy subverts the centralized canonical order as a source of historical events.

The use of parody and ironic narrative produces doubts about the subject's decisive truth and the possibility of a unique official view of history. Toda's description of Sancho fits a postmodern critical reading of Irisarri's novel. Ihab Hassan believes in the anti-elitist thrust that characterized the postmodern critical approach. Such anti-elitism carries a deconstruction of the traditionally dominant power. The elitist voice of the dominant male suffers a mutation in its public,

private and aesthetic foundations. There is an anti-authoritarian tendency that leads to a profound modification of male and female archetypes. As a result, this modification builds a powerful subtext that advances feminine rule against masculine rule. There will be a new order, the feminine order, which would undermine the masculine voice almost to the point of vanishing.⁴⁰ In the chapter entitled “Nájera”, Elvira reminds Toda of the reasons why she forms part of the expedition to Cordoba: she wants to recover the remains of the Saint child Pelayo. These two women’s priorities again produce verbal conflict. Elvira’s reason for the trip is to recollect the Saint’s remains, while Toda’s reason is obviously to return Sancho on the throne of Leon. The ancient queen of Navarre reiterates the physical situation of the king of León and the things necessary to recover and to preserve his kingdom and his dignity:

Mira, ahora quiero decirte que, cuando tu hermano Sancho sea otra vez rey de León, lo ates corto en el yantar y en los placeres para que sea un buen rey y, si en algún momento anda mal encaminado, deja tu convento y gobierna por él, pues ya sabes que Sancho es más bien liviano y corto de miras y muy influenciable por las gentes. (94-5)

The king’s image contains the elements necessary to characterize him as a parody of regal authority. The technique used by the patriarchal system in an attempt to mark the subservient position of the female character’ appears inverted here. By the use of expressions such as “los placeres”, “bien liviano” “corto de miras” and “muy influenciable”, the male character is portrayed by attributes traditionally imposed upon a female character: weak, emotional, instinctive, oversensitive and easy to manipulate. Sancho is such a willing servant of his appetites that he is eager to surrender himself to them. Contrary to her brother, Elvira represents a

solid power alternative. Governance by a woman is the best governance of all because she possesses superior strength of will, an extraordinary capacity for suffering and an ability to take control in the face of most catastrophic situations. If Sancho cannot withstand the demands of being king, Elvira has to take control of the situation. By means of the image of Sancho, Irisarri's Toda challenges the *status quo*, questioning a cultural heritage assumed to the present day. The parodic symbolism that characterizes her grandson is capable of normalizing the discursive representation of women and gladly tolerating it.

García Sánchez

2. The Passive King, Literary Traditions and Transformations of the Masculine Voice

2.1. García Sánchez and the Parody of the Medieval King's Supremacy

Toda, reina de Navarra contains a series of power relationships between the female character as independent and self-confident subject and her male equivalent. Another important power relationship is the one that she establishes with her son García Sánchez, which is characterized by the empowerment of feminine authority and political hegemony.

With the introduction of Sancho el Craso, the use of parody and ironic narrative reflected the deconstruction of the male characters in literature. Both irony and parody have produced an analytical approach that undermined the official historical perspective of the patriarchal order. Irisarri disrupts García Sánchez' historiographic image as an authoritative and forceful male character

when she establishes a parodic link between his portrait and the postmodern criticism of the meta-narratives.

The postmodern revision of History negotiates a tragicomic subversion of canonical codes and the historical events that they represent, destabilizing the social, political and intellectual structures of the official discourse. One of its particular critical approaches questions the cultural and intellectual Western heritage and reaffirms the improbability of History's universality. Jean Francois Lyotard examines the rational platform of Western cultures and concludes by affirming the vital importance of a heterogeneous, decentralized peripheral discourse. This French intellectual breaks out from the dominant aesthetic and rejects the legitimatizing myths of modernity because they produce an intellectual obstacle. Lyotard believes that the cause of such blockage is to be found in what he calls les grand récits ("meta-narratives"), which are superior narratives that require an operative space that surpasses the circumstances described within them, thereby offering without hesitation a social and historical totality. Lyotard advocates for the use of les petits récits ("micro-stories") that promotes a system of knowledge opposed to elitism of society and the discourse of the official history and the literary canon.⁴¹

Once again, the tools used to question the viability of these meta-narratives are parody and irony. Prior to the trip to Al-Andalus, the omniscient narrator offers a vivid and ethnographic image of the activity in the court of Pamplona and of Toda's meticulousness at maintaining maximum order. The description of García Sánchez departs from the image of the hero in both the

literary cannon and the official view of history. The king's image is that of a passive and atypical monarch, a simple spectator. He finds the public affairs of the kingdom unappealing and reveals an extreme indifference toward his mother's enterprise. His image is at odds with the patriarchal system's *modus operandi*, is situated in a parodic place with burlesque intentions:

Don García se despedía una y mil veces de de Doña Teresa, que a la sazón se quedaba en Pamplona ... Y daba las mejillas a su marido, a Don Sancho y a Doña Toda ... Don García arroja besos con la mano a la esposa que deja en Pamplona y ¡ay! una congoja se adueña de su corazón.(14-5)

His lack of joyful activism presents a particularity: the king concentrates his body and soul into a single point of reference: his beloved wife Teresa. García's depiction confirms the existence of a narrative mechanism that produces a continuous parodic literary dialogue with a specific poetic style: Amor Cortés ("Courtly love").

2.2. García Sánchez and the Parodic Image of the Courtly Lover

Courtly love is a medieval lyric that expresses a code for amorous behavior between the trouvère and his beloved, who is usually a married noblewoman. The social and marital status of the latter makes their love an impossible one, a situation that increases his pain and his desire for her. In spite of all the rejections and inconveniences, love is cause for joy and it is always better to love even when it is not reciprocal.⁴² In Irisarri's novel, an analogically parodic connection links the king of Navarre and the archetypical lover from the lyric poetry of courtly love.

García Sánchez and the trouvère have in common the fact that their beloveds are married noblewomen. In the case of the king, the woman is his wife. Moreover, the consummation of their love is going to be extremely difficult because it is physically impossible. He apparently has an essential role in the expedition to Cordoba. Pain is also going to be his constant travel companion, entering in an emotional dynamic that will accompany him the entire way to Al-Andalus. The use of phrases as “arroja besos con la mano” and “¡ay!, una congoja se adueña de su corazón” establishes a parallel between his delicate condition and the situation of the courtly lover. Such situation establishes a psychological dichotomy that undermines his position as a self-confident representative of the patriarchal order.

In Irisarri’s work, the reconstruction of the past deals with the integration of the medieval lyric within the novel’s argument. Such practice indicates a fictional transformation suggested by the parody of the canonical model. The result is a metamorphosis by which this new courtly lover subverts the conventional image of the medieval king, deconstructing the Spanish mythology that identifies the figure of the forceful ruler and mighty warrior with the Reconquest. García’s identity departs from the traditional portrayal of authoritarian monarch because of his indifference. He only has a single thought in mind, his desired Teresa. From the beginning of the trip to Cordoba, Sancho and his uncle García shared the assault tower. The king of Navarre decided to take his quarters in the upper deck of the tower, the highest point possible, in order to be able to say goodbye to his wife for the longest time. García reacts to the

separation with great sadness that persists when he remembers her at his palace of Pamplona:

Lo que sí tenía Teresa era un marido enamorado, sí. Nada menos que un rey, hijo de reyes, que suspiraba por ella desde la altura sin dejar de mirar hacia Pamplona. Don García había hecho su casa en la atalaya y ya no bajaba ni a comer ni a dormir, ni hacer aguas mayores o menores ... Decían que Don García quería estar más cerca del cielo. (33)

The king's figure contains features that entail an inversion of the power system. Using terms such as dominant, determined, and highly intellectual to describe him lacks significance. García, as the *trouvère* in the medieval lyric, obtains pleasure through pain. As the opposite of the archetypal lover of "Courtly Love" whose ultimate goal depends on being in physical contact with his lover during the different amorous stages, García physically departs from her presence. His pain comes as consequence of his seclusion from the real world. He lives apart from the rest of the expedition and far from his consort queen. The assault tower becomes a sacred place for worshiping his beloved and a prison for his mourning. Accepting his physical and symbolic limitations and his self-imposed isolation, García complies with his vow to remain faithful due to his temporary inability to performance his duties as a lover. Within the feudal relationship in which the noblewoman becomes the master and the lover becomes the servant, Teresa turns out to be more than a master: she becomes a deity. Worshiping her from the very top of the *almajaneque*, García wants to be as close as possible to heaven.

For Irisarri, García's parodic image as a courtly lover is means to challenge the traditional masculine discourse. The conventional difference between masculine and feminine representations is reversed by the displacement

of the homogenous voice, which inverts the identity of powerful male character. García Sánchez, the powerful king of Navarre and son of the great Queen Toda, now becomes García the disheartened lover who makes possible the transformation of the female character into the nucleus of the narrative.

During a conversation between Toda and the king about his stay in the almajaneque, García's figure again appears inactive and uninterested in the outside world—an image that ironically fits his behavior as a courtly lover. The intertextual discussion between the parodic function of the king as the foundation of the patriarchal order and the parameters of medieval lyric's produces a literary transformation that transgresses the canonical paradigms. The contrast between his social position as king of Navarre and his actual emotional conduct during the trip to Cordoba shows the absurdity of his behavior:

Don García se conmovió al escuchar el nombre de su amada ... Hizo ver a la reina que bajaría porque se lo pedía ella ... pero le suplicó que no le dirigiera la palabra, ni nadie, para no tener que contestar, pues era hablar lo que le costaba, más incluso que moverse, ya que desde que saliera de la capital llevaba una gran congoja en su corazón de esposo. (36)

Sadness and apathy define García's image. His touching reactions, when he hears Teresa's name, trigger a laughable response. His sensitive yet indifferent qualities as monarch clash with a world known for its violence and incessant wars. The king of Navarre's need for silence and seclusion to the melancholic burden that carries inside is the opposite of those expected from a character of such magnitude. His performance presents a systematic challenge to the *status quo* due to the absence of cultural, social and political practices that he, as a ruler, should implement. His parodic description thus reinforces Toda's character as a solid

alternative for power and social control. The king of Navarre's ridiculous behavior gives greater strength to the queen who surpasses the masculine figure in terms of intellectual, political and military skills.

This characterization of García Sánchez is accentuated as the expedition advances toward the capital of Al-Andalus. The omniscient narrator portrayed the king as an untraditional, inoperative ruler, but Toda's words offer a new dimension to his parodic image. The queen now sees him as the representative of a decadent order, as a lethargic second-class voice that is indispensable for inverting the traditional patriarchal system. After visiting the tomb of her husband in the monastery of San Esteban of Deyo, Toda and her confidant Boneta chat about the two kings, her grandson Sancho and her son García, and the hopes and expectations she has for them:

Mira, Boneta, no sé si alguna vez, Sancho volverá a ser rey de León, pero me temo que, cuando yo muera cualquiera pueda quitarle el reino a García, por ello he de vivir muchos años ... Mira García, por ejemplo. Una pena de hombre, que sino fuera rey, no sería nada, Boneta, nada. Seguro que está tañendo el laud ... Y mientras nosotras llevando el peso de la diputación. (61-2)

The multifaceted Toda seen in Irisarri's fiction as Toda/queen, Toda/mother and Toda/woman contrasts with the minimal image of King García. Ciplijauskaitė believes that feminine discourse can be a way to develop an action of subversion with irony and the control of words.⁴³ Toda's discourse depicts a melancholic king who negatively shifts from a self-absorbed subject to an absolutely incapable and unsuccessful monarch. Toda has no confidence in her son's leadership abilities and his simple function as a man. Ironically, the king's description by

Toda disarticulates his subjectivity as a forceful character, and, at the same time, bolsters her own image.

By retrieving Toda's thoughts, the omniscient narrator destabilizes García Sánchez's authority, his political legitimacy and his leadership. In contrast to the ideal for political ambitions and the desire for total military domination that Toda symbolizes, the narrator gives emphasis to his emotional and oversensitive personality and his apathy for any public and military projects. García's image calls into question the ideological validity of the historical balance of power, gender and racial relations:

Pues Chaafar había podido ver al rey de Navarra en una actitud indeseable. Indeseable, sí. Porque cuando ella, la reina muriese, y en Pamplona sólo quedara ese rey que lloraba, sería muy fácil para los sarracenos arrancarle el reino.(179)

The narrator's portrayal of the king as a weak and sensitive figure destabilizes the traditions and ethical principles of the patriarchal system and demonstrates the writer's concerns about the uncertain boundaries between the official and the peripheral discourses.

During a conversation between Toda and her nephew Abd-ar-Rahman III in which they talk about family relationships, authority and political control, the queen offers an important yet unexpected image of her son. In order to counteract the descriptions used by the Caliph of Cordoba to describe his family members, she defines the monarch of Navarre by adding aspects of her own psychological reality and her leadership capability to those of King García:

Yo con mis hijos tuve suerte. Don García, el único varón, es parco, justo, recto, brillante en el decir y el mejor jugador de tablas del mundo entero ... Eso sí, tiene la cólera presta, ama la guerra, y está pronto a intervenir

en cualquier disputa aunque no vaya con él, o a blandir y medir su espada ante cualquier nimiedad ... Como vos, dejando el trono a Don Al Hakam, yo moriré tranquila dejando el reino en sus manos. (299)

The words that come from Toda instantly surprise us. We witness a powerful discourse that emphasizes in positive terms the private and public statue of her son. By using adjectives that equate him with the model of medieval monarchs and their literary characterization, Toda apparently builds him up to a mythological and foundational level of recollection. We soon realize that Toda's description of García does not really reflect what we have seen in Toda, reina de Navarra. The king's image receives an ironic treatment since it suggests a fundamental incongruity between the actions, words and thoughts of the king and the actions that readers expect from him. Her references to his capabilities of waging war and acting as a perfect knight and hero do not match the way he has behaved in Irisarri's narrative. Passivity, melancholy and apathy define him far better, since he spends most of his time isolated and pining for his wife Teresa. He has shown no interest in public affairs and he has lived as a marginal figure always under the protective umbrella of his powerful mother. Portraying García as a trustworthy and influential character is nothing more than a fraud and a fallacy: Toda has been the backbone of the kingdom of Navarre and of the journey to Cordoba.

The expressive mode of the parodic discourse, the verbal irony and the alternation of the narratives codes transform our preconceived ideas of the patriarchal order and its "powerful" representative. In Irisarri's Toda, reina de Navarra, García suffers a negative transformation. This text underscores the

queen's strength and her character as solid feminine voice. Toda reinforces her characteristic of being a model for woman's self-determination by powerfully counteracting the mythology that traditionally supports male discursive power.

Andregoto de Galacián

Toda also establishes special relationships with female characters, as the one with Boneta, with Elvira, her granddaughter, and with her niece, Andregoto.

3. Heroine, Literature and Mythology

3.1. Andregoto and the Feminine Voice as an Independent Literary Subject

Lyotard's postmodern parameters reject centralizing aesthetic structures and the myths of modernity and advocate the negation of meta-narratives. According to these principles, the figure of García as a parodic courtly lover establishes a critical attitude toward society's canonical discourse. Related to this critical dialogue with postmodern criticism, Doña Andregoto de Galancián, who possesses great physical and mental strength, is used to parody the traditional, extraordinary hero from literary texts such as poemas épicos ("epic poems") and novelas de caballería ("knight or Chivalry novels")

In Irisarri's narrative, Andregoto de Galancián is a distinctive and unusual female character that challenges the image of the powerful male hero. Although in Epic poems the latter possesses high behavioral standards and valuable military skills, Chivalry novels also portray him as an extraordinary man often with mythological or unnatural origins. The presence of Toda's great niece allows Irisarri to set up a parodic connection between Andregoto's portrayal and the postmodern critical approach to feminine the representation of women. Her

appearance in the novel comes in a short story, a connective mechanism between the plot of Irisarri's narrative and Toda's account. At the beginning of their journey to Al-Andalus, in the chapter "Camino de Córdoba", Alhambra, one of Toda's constant companions, asks the queen to tell, once again, the true story of Doña Andregoto and her special arrival into the world. In the next three pages, Toda tells the story of her great-niece. The role of oral production within the novel functions as a paradigm, subverting the unilateral vision of the past by means of a peripheral narrative.

Joanne Arnett emphasizes the importance of storytelling and argues that telling a story bestows on the relater special control and authority and the capacity to attract an audience to the particular anecdote. Storytelling has always been the transcendental ideological machinery by which individuals from diverse cultures have ensured the coherence of their conventions and have communicated significant aspects of their society. For Arnett the female narrator's importance goes beyond her present moment and status since she is "the Keeper of tales which encompass history, meaning, truth, for whole families, whole communities, whole societies" (28). Toda assumes this role for her entourage. The queen's account adds a new meaning to the cultural foundation of society by offering Andregoto's uncanny origin as a character with unnatural mythological uniqueness. Toda's story starts with the moment in which the newborn girl supernaturally arrives in the castle of Nájera:

Una fría noche, el día doce de las calendas de enero, lo recuerda muy bien, el viento llamó tres veces, tres veces a la puerta del Castillo de Nájera. Doña Mayor dejó de tañer el arpa. Pon, pon, pon llamaba el viento ... las dos mujeres bajaron a la portena. Corrieron amedrentadas y

encontraron a una preciosa niña de pelo bermejo en una capacha de paja ... la niña bermeja había venido entre prodigios. A través del viento; un viento capaz de llamar a la portena, pon, pon, pon ... la niña era la hija del viento.(22)

Particular elements such as her red hair or the arrival by the wind give her a mythical dimension. Toda's cousin finds her in a basket. Doña Mayor adopts the little girl, without known parents, as her own. Her introduction into the world can be equated with that of male heroes of the Judeo-Christian literary tradition from Moses to Amadis of Gaula, which ascribes to her unprecedented cultural relevance. The queen of Navarre presents her genesis as a metaphor of symbolic existence that lies outside the realm of the dominant system.

As a troubadour, Toda constructs a literary image of the young warrior. As the queen continues her story, she adds two more elements to the portrait of her great-niece. Andregoto's mythical dimension turns out to be a suitable part of the oral tradition, remaining in the psyche of the community of Navarre:

No ha mucho en Pamplona, lo recordarán vuestas mercedes, escuchamos a un juglar que relataba las tres versiones de la venida al mundo de Doña Andregoto y de una ciudad que se llevó el viento en las lejanas tierras de la Germania. El juglar hablaba de un fuerte viento que la había depositado en las puertas del castillo ... añadía que la había traído un hada buena que conversó largamente con Doña Mayor ... y otra tercera interpretación que la niña bermeja la había traído una gran ave de presa y que mi prima no tuvo embarazo. (23)

Her portrait reflects an intertextual process that links her representation with the origins of medieval Spanish literature, the oral tradition. The popular figure of the troubadour functioned as the mythmaker because he transmitted the life and feats of both fictional and factual great heroes. Toda's transmission of Andregoto's life establishes a demystifying mechanism that transforms the idea of oral

representation into a literary counter-canon for the image of women. Her fame grew from castle to castle and from town to town in the songs of the troubadour. Andregoto becomes a meta-character who is simultaneously the creation of Irisarri, Toda and the poets and their popular audience, who together reinvented the universal feminine essence with her prodigious features.

As a she patrols the military borders that separate the kingdom of Navarre from the caliphate of Cordoba, Andregoto's figure transforms the negative connotations that have marked woman as a docile and passive object. She possesses the exceptional attributes of a hero such as extraordinary strength, skill with weapons and courage:

Las dueñas no hablaron del viento que trajo a la niña pero se conoció. Se supo lo del viento y se inventó otro tanto más, porque la niña, ahora mujer, es una gran guerrera ... Andregoto es portentosa, me sirve con celo en la frontera y no ignoráis que por doquiera que va montada a caballo levanta un viento en derredor. (23-4)

Her uncanny, mythical aura maintains a positive balance with the historical tone of the novel. As an indispensable intellectual instrument, the perception of Andregoto as a mythological figure renovates the traditional concept of myth.

3.2. Andregoto and the Reconstruction of the Medieval Epic Hero

Andregoto of Nájera appears as a foundational myth that is as valuable as those of El Cid Campeador or Fernán González. Andregoto is no longer a peripheral reflex of the male discourse. She becomes the central axis of national mythology, moving toward to an ultimate feminine representation as a hero. The young noblewoman is a true warrior; an idol because others look to her as an extraordinary figure. She inverts the conventions of which society's cultural

structures rest, becoming a solid alternative for power: “Y, naturalmente, era Andregoto de Galancián, la mujer más brava de Navarra. Claro, quién había de ser, se decían los buenos pamploneses, sino la brava de Nájera que los defendía de los moros en las estribaciones del reino”(69). Contrary to the position of the official History, Andregoto’s image shakes the absoluteness of the past. She is a brave soldier, an independent woman who in her own space manages power and the welfare of her people.

In Irisarri’s narrative, the relationship between the oral literary tradition and feminine discourse point out the importance of the female character as a mythical entity. Cixous establishes a symbiotic relationship between the feminist text and women to the extent that they destroy the basic outlines of the patriarchal institutions and the law.⁴⁴ Her premises of literary production connect with Andregoto’s identity, which produces an intertextual dialogue with medieval canonical texts. As a brave hero always ready for action, the castellan of Nájera is an element of popular culture of transcendental literary importance. Her *modus operandi* has allowed her to become immortal:

Lambra interrumpió para decir que Andregoto andaba en las canciones que cantaba el pueblo y que en la Historia había habido otras mujeres guerreras como Hipólita, la reina de las Amazonas, o muy bravas, como Calpurnia, las madres de los Gracos; que Andregoto no era un caso único aunque lo fuera en las tierras cristianas de este tiempo, y que había oído una canción en la que se asemejaba a la reina Toda con aquellas Hipólitas y Calpurnia ... Cuando oí asonar esa canción por primera vez, desconocía quien eran estas dos bravas féminas, aunque las supuse mujeres de pro, puesto que eran cantadas como Carlomagno, Roldán o Bernardo del Carpio. (24)

The omniscient narrator's description permits us to observe a particularity within her image. Her textual figure turns out to be vital for oral tradition. Andregoto's significance is comparable to the traditional mythological figures of Spain's literary heritage. Women describe female characters in order to mark the significance of prominent female figures throughout History. The intertextual dialogue puts the historical magnitude of women on the same plan as that of Charlemagne, Bernardo del Carpio o Roldán. Myth production now becomes a method for recovering the importance of women, conserving and protecting for posterity their contribution to Navarre and to History.

The story of Andregoto represents a departure from the ordinary distribution of social power. The omniscient narrator solidifies her authority and her autonomous discourse. As they approach the land dominated by the caliphate of Cordoba, Toda and her entourage have to cross the Ebro River. Before crossing it, a supernatural space delineates Andregoto's mythical energy, anticipating the astonishing dimension of the daughter of the Wind with a small token of her uncanny qualities, "El viento ululaba fiero. No, no, explicaba el alcaide de Varia, este viento empezó ayer; no es común tal temporal por estos predios" (68). The symbolic image of Andregoto's abilities outlines her greatness. The omniscient narrator confirms her spectacular skills by displaying an insight that extends beyond the dominant official order. When Irisarri attributes extraordinary values to Andregoto, exterior features demolish the concept of woman as a being habitually confined a private domestic environment that is isolated from the male-dominated public world:

Dió el grito de alarma de que una inmensa polvareda que llegaba hasta el cielo se acercaba a toda prisa en dirección a ellos ... ¡Ya llegaba el torbellino...! Estaban todos, pamploneses y leoneses, aterrados, pues esperaban ser arrebatados, alzados y zarandeados por el viento loco cuando de repente cesó el fenómeno y se escucho una fuerte voz: ¿Do es Toda Aznar, la reina de Navarra? Y del polvo surgió un jinete montado en un magnífico caballo blanco. Los expedicionarios se quedaron espantados, unos creyeron ver la estampa de la muerte, otros, uno de los Jinetes del Apocalipsis y los demás, nada bueno ... ¡Yo soy la reina Toda! ¿Quién me llama ...? El misterioso jinete desmontó del caballo, anduvo con gráciles pasos hasta el carro, se hincó de hinojos en el suelo y dijo: Yo soy Andregoto de Galancián, tu sobrina y vengo a servirte. (68)

An unusual whirlwind and a large dust cloud, which makes it impossible for the reader to recognize the true gender of the rider, accompanied her arrival. Her image is ambiguous, thereby producing uncertainty in the reader's mind. With gender neutral adjectives and nouns such as “fenómeno”, “fuerte voz” and “misterioso jinete” together with “gráciles pasos”, the omniscient narrator retains and slows the climax of the scene, creating a rainbow of possible endings that rejects a limited code for power relationships. With this androgynous image, Irisarri dismantles masculine cultural clichés. Gender archetypes begin to change, offering the feminine discourse as a solid alternative for literary production. At the end of this passage, the narrative regains its pace, reaching its pinnacle when the raider introduces herself to the reader as Andregoto de Galancián, generating a destabilizing gap within the official structures of the patriarchal order. This knight is a female knight with her own warrior-like features.

3.3. Andregoto and the Feminine Consciousness: Exploring her Personality

Her consciousness of being a mythical character comes into the readers' view when Andregoto tells her own story. As she explains the reasons why she is

known as Hija del Viento (“daughter of the wind”), the reader soon realizes the importance of this description: “me dicen la hija del viento y cuando cabalgo, lo llevo conmigo y lo arrojo a mayor velocidad cuanto más aprisa lo llevo, por eso cabalgo sola” (68). The wind is a metaphor for freedom and it is characterized by autonomy of movement and a freedom from restrictions. The wind is also power, which can overwhelm by its force. Due to her capacity for controlling and creating it, the wind becomes an extension of her body. In contrast with Sancho’s inability to perform as a true king and García’s apathy and passivity, Andregoto’s portrait embodies a female’s image that exceeds human limits. The contrastive representation between the noblemen and the young female warrior reinforces the validity of a female independent space, transforming the traditional powerful masculine “I” into the “Other”. Her ability to flying away from all limitations serves as an allegory for emancipation: the release from restrictive norms and regulations of patriarchal society. She is the cause of the wind and her effects are the power and independence of the feminine subject.

In that the young noblewoman’s voice develops a complete image of herself, she does not just speak about her uncanny capacity to control the wind. She is also a commanding female with a political program and social leadership. Her control of language challenges and overcomes the role of woman as a silent spectator of the political, social and military events that configure the past. She is a powerful subject who dominates nature and the elements surrounding her. Andregoto compels the reader to alter their conception of women, since she acts according to her own wishes and beliefs:

Diran vuesas mercedes que non debiera andar a caballo más que cuando fuera menester, más piensen que con mi empleo lo es menester muchas veces ... Que acecha el musulmán en la Ribera y sube hasta Nájera queriendo conquistar lo que fue suyo y yo he de salir en su contra porque soy teniente del rey y, en consecuencia, mujer de armas, y, por otra parte, no se concibe a un caballero sin caballo. (72)

Her own description allows us to understand female characters as the prime movers of the historical actions from which the narrative storyline originates. Her self-recognition as a warrior, a She-knight, validates her role inverting hierarchical social and cultural structures. As an analogy for independence and individuality, the young warrior's identity authenticates the role of Woman in the construction of history.

Irisarri's Toda, reina de Navarra portrays female characters as self-sufficient subjects. Toda's intellectual capacity solidifies her political ambitions and allows her to explore patterns of power relationships. Her personal agenda and her interaction with Sancho el Craso and García Sánchez reveal the significance of the feminine discourse. The queen of Navarre sets a precedent as a historical and literary active woman. With Toda and Andregoto, the author confirms the importance of the universal female subjects in the public account of historical events.

Notes

Urraca and Toda, reina de Navarra

¹ Amalia Pulgarín, Metaficción historiográfica: la novela histórica en la narrativa hispánica postmodernista (Madrid: Ediciones Fundamentos, 1995) 10-11.

² See Michael Ryan's Literary theory: an anthology (Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998) 101-104.

³ Vance Holloway, El posmodernismo y otras tendencias de la novela española (1967-1995) (Madrid: Ediciones Fundamentos, 1999) 160.

⁴ Lynn K. Talbot, "Lourdes Ortiz's Urraca: a re-vision/revision of History," Romance Quarterly 38 (1991) 437.

⁵ Biruté Ciplijauskaitė, La novela femenina contemporánea (1970-1985). Hacia una tipología de la narración en primera persona (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1988) 150.

⁶ Hélène Cixous, "The laugh of Medusa," SIGNS. Journal of Women in Culture and Society 4 (1976) 889.

⁷ See Jean-François Lyotard "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" in Innovation/Renovation, eds. S and I Hassan (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983) 71-82 and The Postmodern Condition: a report on knowledge (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984)

⁸ Paul Ricoeur, La lectura del tiempo pasado: memoria y olvido (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1998) 13-52.

⁹ Jacques Lacan, Ecrits: A selection (London: Tavistock, 1977) 2-15.

¹⁰ Carmen M. Rivera Villegas, "Cuerpo, palabra y autodescubrimiento en Urraca, de Lourdes Ortiz," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies 74 (1996) 308.

¹¹ In the re-edited Historia de España y de la civilización española (2001), Rafael Altamira points out Urraca's struggle for reaching the crown of Castile. The tense political and military situation that the kingdom experience after Alfonso VI's death increased the stressful relations between Urraca and the Castile and Leon's noblemen. They wanted an energetic and controlling warrior and leader capable to defeat the Almorávides who already conquered Madrid and Talavera. Urraca was not their favorite for the throne. 227.

¹² Roland Barthes, Mythologies (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972) 144-5.

¹³ Altamira explains the relevance of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, El Cid Campeador, in the relationships between the Muslim kingdoms and the Medieval Christian Spain. El Cid entered history and literature as a character that fell into exile from Castile due to a confrontation with Alfonso VI. Step by step, he astutely regained prestige and richness by helping with his sword Muslim kings and noblemen. His

reputation thus reached mythical levels that were supported by the oral tradition, the Castilian poets, popular ballads and Muslim writers. 225-6.

¹⁴ See Michel Foucault, The history of sexuality (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978)

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, Of grammatology (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1976) 20.

¹⁶ Frederick Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981) 86-7.

¹⁷ Hélène Cixous and C. Clément, The Newly Born Woman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986) 87.

¹⁸ Ruth M. Mellinkoff, Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993)

¹⁹ Linda Hutcheon, A Poetic of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction (New York: Routledge, 1988) 69-71.

²⁰ Virginia Higginbotham, "Beyond of the Postmodern in Lourdes Ortiz's Urraca," Revista Monográfica (2001): 182-3.

²¹ Rivera Villegas, 312.

²² Cixous, 880.

²³ Ciplijauskaitė, 153.

²⁴ Julia Kristeva, Poderes de la perversión: Ensayo sobre Louis Ferdinand Céline (México D. F. : Siglo Veintiuno Editores, S.A. 1988) 7-9.

²⁵ Mercedes Juliá, "Feminismo, Historia y Postmodernidad: La Novela Urraca de Lourdes Ortiz," Revista Hispanica Moderna 4 (1998) 359.

²⁶ Jose María Jover Zamora Ed, Historia de España/Fundación Ramón Menéndez Pidal (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 2000) 115-120.

²⁷ The historical discourse has negated Urraca's relevance in history. The texts written during her time concentrated on such as figures as the bishop Gelmírez and her second husband Alfonso El Batallador that implies a partial approach of History and Urraca's negative representation. Juliá names unless two of those texts, Historia Compostelana and Las crónicas anónimas de Sahagún. 377.

²⁸ In Historia de España/Fundación Menéndez Pidal, we see the importance of Toda's realm of power in the development of the battle of Alhándega. She appears as a major military factor and her relevance in the military operation is reflected on the historical texts. 120.

²⁹ For Derrida, the concept of difference allows the mutable character of the sign that undermines the identity logic of uniqueness based in the privilege of the primary term of binary oppositions that construct the Western school of thinking. In Margins of philosophy, Derrida understands the non-representational nature of the meaning that avoids the possibility of one's identity self-representation. Derrida explains that the difference affects both terms of the binary opposition because of the fact that both terms are part of the difference's chains that

influence their essence. That is, the difference of the primary term is no longer outside; rather every identity is divide within from the other that makes it its supplement. 16-8.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings (1972-1977), (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980)

³¹ Jonathan Culler, On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 84-86.

³² Ciplijauskaitė, 27.

³³ See Luce Irigaray, The sex which is not one (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985)

³⁴ Cixous, "The Laugh of Medusa," 885-8.

³⁵ Hayden White, Metahistoria: la imaginación histórica en la Europa del sigloXIX, 2a ed (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001) 9-11.

³⁶ Hutcheon, 22-36.

³⁷ F. J. Del Prado Biezma, Cómo se analiza una novela (Madrid: Editorial Alhambra, 1984) 38.

³⁸ Barthes, 154.

³⁹ Derrida, "Of grammatology," 21-25.

⁴⁰ In "POSTmodernISM: a Paracritical Bibliography", Hassan establishes the parameters that distinguish the postmodern theory. He analyzes the different applications that this critical approach has and how he can be connected with the different artistic expressions. 19-29. In "Toward a Concept of Posmodernism", Hassan redefines the concept by comparing it with the characteristics assigned to the Modernism. 152.

⁴¹ Jean-Francois Lyotard, 138.

⁴² Ana María Platas, Diccionario de terminos literarios (Madrid: Editorial Espasa Calpe, 2000) 345.

⁴³ Ciplijauskaitė, 205.

⁴⁴ Cixous, "The Laugh," 875.

CHAPTER II

THE LATENT VOICE: HISTORY, AUTOBIOGRAPHY, AND SELF-REPRESENTATION OF THE MINORITY DISCOURSE (MORISCO AND MORO) IN MANUEL VILLAR RASO'S LAS ESPAÑAS PERDIDAS AND ANTONIO GALA'S EL MANUSCRITO CARMESÍ

Moros and Moriscos and the New Historical Novel of Democratic Spain

1. Connection between History and Critical Framework

The representation of “moros” and “moriscos” is ambivalent in both the Spanish literary canon and in historical texts. Their images have long endured a dualistic treatment due to antithetical perceptions among scholars. Miguel Angel Bunes Ibarra analyzes the life and tragedy of the Muslim population and its social and political mistreatment in the context of the historical adjustments in Spain before and after 1492. He outlines how writers, historians and chroniclers from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth century have perceived them and concludes that the Morisco's victimization was a tragic, yet inevitable consequence of the complexity of the Seventeenth century's social upheavals.¹

In the modern era, repressive structures and censorship have denied the Moriscos the right to be heard. This community has traditionally been perceived as peripheral and writers have not yet created a formal space for their representation. When they do appear, they are portrayed as fundamentally flawed and incapable of autonomy or independent opinions. In the traditional binary

construction of identity, they are relegated to the subordinate position of the “I/Other” pair. Moreover, they became scapegoats for whatever ailed Spain at the time. This process of alienation and marginalization is evident in the decisive literary and historical distortions in the construction of literary characters.²

The transformation of Spain into a democratic state in 1976 creates an atmosphere of cultural liberation that fosters new and more open ties between history and literature. Spanish intellectuals celebrated the “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” as an emblematic option for the expression of voices that had been silenced and for new forum for evaluating the past.³ As opposed to realism, this new conception of the application of the parameters of historiography to literary creation no longer imposes a fixed image of the past.

Postmodern, post-structural and postcolonial theories contend that fragmentary discourses rearrange and dislocate the insider/outsider and the center/periphery paradigms that modernity has maintained as the axis of its discourse. These theories thus offer a productive framework for understanding the representation of minority voices. They are all predicated upon the contrast between perceived reality and the depiction of historical events. It is impossible to assume that any representation of perceived reality is something other than an arbitrary and unreliable construction of reason. The dominant order can no longer impose a single point of view in order to create a homogenous conception of the world because these discourses generate a disabling process that undermines society’s power system.⁴ This approach to reevaluating the past becomes an

indispensable critical tool for the deconstruction of institutionalized historical truth.

2. Two Novels: Introduction of Yuder and Boabdil

In Manuel Villar Raso's Las Españas perdidas (1984) and Antonio Gala's El manuscrito carmesí (1990), the secondary voice's reconstruction of the past triggers an intellectual disruption of the homogeneity imposed during the Renaissance in Spain. The authors underline the distinctiveness of the character's singularity, especially the Morisco Diego/Yuder and King Boabdil. As minority voices and metaphors for their communities, these historical figures point out the failure of the literary canon to recognize the relevance of their people in the formation of the Spanish culture. Both writers propose a rectifying process by which the main characters in each of their novels have a controlling voice in the narrative.

2.1 Las Españas perdidas

Villar Raso's Las Españas perdidas is constructed as an autobiographical re-enactment of the systematic forced "abandonment" of Spain by the Morisco population, which began in the last two decades of the Sixteenth century. The royal edict of 1609 actually used the term "expulsion" as an equivalent to cultural and social nihilation.⁵ The narration consists of the memoirs of the Morisco Diego Cervantes: the main character who later becomes the Muslim Yuder Pasha. Villar Raso's narrative singles out the two major feats of Hispanic-Arab expatriates after they left the kingdom of Granada led by Diego/Yuder. First, they crossed the great Sahara desert as part of an army of mercenaries in 1591. Of the four

thousand Andalusies that fought with him, the majority was from the kingdom of Granada. Second, after the victory of Tondibi, they settled in Timbuktu, today Mali.

In Villar Raso's narrative, Diego/Yuder presents an extremely tragic universe dominated by pure violence. The author's persistent attempts at understanding this dehumanized world through the Morisco character help him to create a new vision of Spain's past. His life in Cuevas del Almanzora before and after the war of las Alpujarras (1568)⁶, allows him to regard hostility as a major impediment to humanity's full realization. He shows the reader the life he has witnessed; a collapsing world dominated by death, political coercion and religious repression. Through the suffering of his community and his own family, Diego/Yuder expresses the social agony and discrimination that were traditionally seen as logical consequences of the formation of a homogeneous Spain. He looks for marks of identity that can comfort his tormented self. For him, freedom is the most valuable and difficult reward that any human being can ever obtain. The existential questioning about who he is and why his people suffer such atrocities is also an attempt to comprehend and to survive in the gruesome reality that is his. His reconsideration of the official view of the past disputes the legitimacy of the expulsion.

A prologue, three chapters and an epilogue compose Villar Raso's novel. In the introduction, the author explains why he becomes interested in this man. He found the fictional diary of Yuder and he wants the public to recognize the Morisco community's cultural and emotional importance in the past and present

of Spain. In the three narrative chapters, the main character tells the story of his life with urgency and anxiety in the face of overwhelming hardship. In the epilogue, the author explains the history of Timbuktu from the death of Yuder in the first decade of the Seventeenth century to its present situation in the Twentieth century. Through Villar Raso's fiction, individual and collective freedom and the condition of being accepted in a place defined as one's own are the measure of the Morisco's sense of identity and self-confidence.

2.2. El manuscrito carmesí

Antonio Gala's El manuscrito carmesí is the fictional narration of the life of Muhammad XI, popularly known as Boabdil El Chico, from when he was a young prince in Granada to his last days as an expatriate in Fez. As a first person narrative, the novel relates Boabdil's perspective of the Spanish Reconquest from 1480 to 1492. This period symbolizes the dramatic beginning of the end of the Hispanic-Arab community, which culminated with the official expulsion of the Morisco in 1609. From his seclusion in the Alhambra, Boabdil appears as an exquisite and wise, yet lonely man. He is a sad witness who powerlessly observes the annihilation of his world.

Gala grants Boabdil the possibility of utilizing a new historical approach to contextualize and recount the tragic events of his past. The king's observations on the cultural importance of the Moorish legacy in Spain challenge both the Christian and Muslim versions of the official historical discourse. On the one hand, the former king of Granada contests the Spanish perspective because he now freely explains the fall of Granada and the circumstances of his own fall. He

defies the idea of an exclusive truth by subverting the notion of conquerors as the only reliable writers of History. On the other hand, Boabdil undermines the received Muslim point of view because it had always portrayed him as one of the most important traitors to Arab culture in the history of Islam.⁷ His narration shows how external pressures and internal political circumstances beyond his control affected his power as a leader. The emergency that he confronts defines him as a human being, overwhelmed by events, who seeks the meaning of his presence in a world of conflict. Boabdil is not considered as an authoritative king because he never truly had the opportunity to exercise power. Nevertheless, his capacity to fill all the gaps deliberately left vacant by the centralized discourse gives him the authority to offer a nontraditional view of the end of Al-Andalus.

Gala's fiction is made up of an introduction, two preliminary chapters, four narrative chapters and one small appendix. First, the writer specifically retells the events by which he accidentally came upon a reddish manuscript, "*un manuscrito carmesí*", the autobiographical discourse of the last Moorish king of Granada. Gala represents himself as a mere translator, establishing a fictional separation between the novel and him. Moreover, Gala wants to guide the reader towards a particular cognitive attitude related to Boabdil's character and the fall of the city of the Alhambra. The two preliminary chapters serve as his introduction. In the four narrative chapters, the king totally assumes control of the narration, presenting a series of private and collective historical experiences.

In Gala's fiction, Boabdil's uniqueness sets up a cultural and emotional conflict with History. As a result, his character is essentially a portrayal of

loneliness. Conditioned by his holding unwanted power, his experiences weaken his confidence in the grandeur of fellow human beings.

Self-representation, Identity and Social Consideration

1. History, Society and the Subject

Western societies have created a sequence of simplistic pejorative images of the marginalized individuals who have been regarded neither as makers of history nor as positive central literary “subjects.”⁸ Such individuals who have been silenced, subjugated, exploited and considered *contra natura* become the peripheral voice. The contemporary *faux* homogeneity of Spanish identity conceals the ways history and its narratives have distorted the peripheral voice’s capacity for independent self-expression. Society has never created for this group its own singular space for personal reliability, self-confidence and aptitude for leadership.

Poststructuralist, postcolonial and postmodern readings of Villar Raso’s Las Españas perdidas and Gala’s El manuscrito carmesí recover and reevaluate the traditionally mutilated representations of Moriscos and Moros that characterized the canonical texts. We can observe how both writers challenge the diminished role of the peripheral characters appearing in historiography and literature. They create changing strategies for a new revisionist dialogue with the past. Both writers insist on the use of the narrative “I” as a method to resist cultural and political hegemony. The juxtaposition of parody, on the one hand, and powerful imagery and jarring descriptions, on the other, constitutes an

indispensable tool to reconvert fixed models within the dominant logocentric order. The literary voices of these two authors offer a balance between the erudite knowledge of past events, the peripheral voice's capability for self-representation and psychological reflections upon their cultural relationships to history.

2. Conclusion

In “Cuatro crónicas noveladas de la destrucción de Granada”, José Ortega establishes a connection between the postmodern paradigms that question reality and the so-called factual historical truth. He explains how Gala and Villar Raso raise doubts about the official version of the past. He puts emphasis on how the main characters of these novels dominate the narrative and tell their stories about the dramatic events that reshaped the racial and cultural configuration of the Iberian Peninsula. For Ortega, the accounts of Diego/Yuder and Boabdil help readers to attain “una nueva forma de acceso a la verdad histórica.”⁹

Following Ortega's critical approach, we can see that the fact that Villar Raso and Gala call into question the authorized *status quo* symbolizes an effort to recognize Spain's rich diversity. Postmodern criticism and postcolonial studies permit an examination of the ways in which the traditional cultural image of Moriscos and Moors can be metamorphosed through the presentation of their private experiences. Both social groups possess the required features to demonstrate the impossibility of a unique and absolute truth.

Las Españas perdidas: Diego/Yuder and the Morisco's Struggle for Self-determination, Collective Identity and the Deconstruction of History

1. The Voice of the Other and his Perspective of the Past: Diego/Yuder as Exponent of the Alternative

The personal discourse of peripheral voices is able to neutralize what cultural logocentric traditions of the past had omitted, misconstrued or considered negligible. The readers perceive the restoration of what had traditionally been forgotten or relegated to an absolute silence. The postmodern reconfiguration of the demanding possibilities of Diego/Yuder's story becomes the first step in deconstructing the official version of the national past. The communicative relation between literary fictions and sociological and political determinants recuperates the historical meaning of the alienated subject.

In Villar Raso's narrative, Diego/Yuder, whose father is Morisco and mother is Christian, reconstructs himself as a conscious subject by means of a distinctive reaction to social repression and religious harassment. His capability to transgress conventional historical discourses of the past allows him the control of the text. Being an omnipotent narrator traditionally typifies the authorized voice of the past capable of establishing a permanent unique truth. Information has been filtered by the official ideological principles, making it impossible to verify what happened in the distant past in its true dimension. Celia Fernández Prieto reflects upon the standard techniques of traditional historical novels as opposed to the innovations of the "*Nueva Novela Histórica*." She formulates the relevance of the scholar's words in the traditional literary recreation of history in the following terms: "...era casi de oráculo, porque el historiador borraba toda huella de la

enunciación para obtener, como decía Barthes, una absoluta transparencia que condujera directamente de las palabras, a la realidad y a los hechos” (147). In Las Españas perdidas, the peripheral voice of the Morisco Diego/Yuder denies the primacy of the conventional narrator. He investigates, analyzes and challenges the recognized and accepted version of historical events, rejecting the restricting values of an imposed reality.

1.1. Daily Experiences and Anecdotes of the Minority Voice: Intimacy and marks of identity

The main character’s narrative implies a psychological inquiry that reveals his emotional state. He continuously questions the essence of human existence, searching for decisive compassion and peace that would revitalize him. Along with the formation of a personal voice, he shares with his audience the atrocities suffered, shedding new intellectual light of the events that surrounded the tragic destiny of the Moriscos. His experiences allow a split narrative sequence of events by which Yuder as the pasha of Timbuktu remembers his arduous life as the young man Diego, the peripheral “Other” in the newly unified Spain. His discourse delineates methods for the recognition and acceptance of the minority voice. Diego/Yuder modulates his personality through the revelation of unspoken aspects of his people as well as of his own idiosyncrasy. The narrator’s strength comes from his ability to present his version of history allowing the readers to determine the validity of his account. The construction of the Morisco as a literary entity is the result of an abstraction from the immediacies of his everyday life, his community’s unorthodox vision of the past and his expectations as a conscious subject.

Villar Raso's fiction destabilizes the official perception of reality by reprioritizing the peripheral and autochthonous anecdote of the past. Stephen Greenblatt believes that the power of external factors is necessary to appreciate the relevance of the creative act. He proposes a view of history that emphasizes the role of wider representations and discourses in public life, analyzing the social transactions and exchanges that go into the making of a literary work. The revision of cultural structures from the perspective of anecdotal and commonplace events thus gives its proper due to the daily knowledge that configures and shapes society.¹⁰

Speaking about the peculiarity of the day-to-day episodes implies new models of subjectivity for the alternative voice. Precise concrete details activate Diego/Yuder's discourse. His narration combines relationships of forced dependency and transformation of the subjects' essential meaning, and this combination reveals a transcendental mutilation of his community's fundamental nature. It emphasizes the relevance of social powers that forge personal experiences. His perspective on the events that he has faced connects with Greenblatt's belief in the validity of marginal anecdote. It can be that argued that this is the essential critical apparatus for subverting the past and the Big Stories.

The narrator investigates the past and offers his particular view throughout his personal quest to reach a self-confident state. In that the concept of Morisco is artificial and culturally imposed, Diego/Yuder struggles to assimilate and understand the nature and meaning of his world. By reflecting on the drastic transformations of the status of his people, he shows how the forced civil

displacement that his community experienced affects their identity. His account describes the emotional harm that constrains the normal functioning within society. Outlining concrete details of political oppression and social annihilation against his ethnicity, Diego/Yuder's story compels the reader to reflect on the actions and historical consequences of the dominant system, both in terms of its meaning and its representations. We can thus perceive the erasure of the marks of identity of Morisco community that points out a methodical destruction of the minority group's fundamental nature:

las mujeres hacía tiempo que ya habían dejado sus almalafas, ajorcas y telas blancas, mostrando al desnudo sus rostros como si fueran esclavas y los hombres sus yalaganes y sus turbantes ... No fabricaban armas ni tenían jóvenes para empuñarlas ... ni siquiera les permitían cantar en su lengua. (18-9)

The narrator's interpretative technique opens a revisionist approach to the official transmission of the events that surrounded the social displacement of the Moriscos. Given that each individual belongs to a community with particular cultural traditions, Diego/Yuder illustrates the ethnical negotiations at work in the profound cultural adjustments of his people. Struggling to maintain their own traditions, the experiences of the Moriscos connect with what W. E. B. Dubois defines as "two-ness." He elaborates this concept while examining the complex and conflictive identity of African-Americans. He observes that they possess a double-consciousness: one as American and another as black that are in conflict; that is, "two souls, two thoughts, two warring ideals in one dark body" (20). Transferring this critical notion to the narrator's examination of society in Villar Raso's novel, we can see that Moriscos suffered an anguished experience of being

both Spanish and Morisco. In an environment that forced them to view themselves as displaced and marginalized, the psychological extremes experienced cause them to assume undesirable social features that reinforce their humiliation and dislocation:

Bebían vino en las tabernas, rompían el ayuno, comulgaban los domingos, siguiendo las directrices que les ordenaba desarraigarse, hablaban en aljamía o lo intentaban, se instruían en las cosas de la fe católica con los padres misioneros, adoraban las estatuas, habían dejado de vender sus bienes, oro, plata, joyas, seda, bestias, llevaban en los sombreros la media luna de paño azul del tamaño de media naranja conforme les tenían mandado, ¿qué pecado hemos cometido? (19)

The complex description of society elaborates his cultural idiosyncrasy due to what he is forced to be and what his ethnicity is forced to become. His narration portrays a disgraceful past wherein the “Other” suffers emotional repression and physical intimidation under the dominant power. The inability of the official order to fully recognize Diego/Yuder either as a Muslim or as a Christian allows the re-examination of his uniqueness. The Morisco’s depiction of his multi-ethnicity becomes a systematic mechanism of defiance that questions the canonical model. Exposing the vulnerability of the human being’s quintessence, the question “Who I am” turns out to be vital for the narrator as well as for his community:

¿Hasta cuándo? Mientras que quede un silo moro en el pueblo, ¿Somos cristianos o moros?—les pregunté al rato, sorprendido por la palabra moro que acababa de decir.—Antes me gustaba pensar que nuestra sangre no era ni mora ni cristiana, hoy no sé lo que somos y tú tendrás que descubrirlo por tí mismo. (103)

Diego's subjectivity strengthens the elementary nature of his identity in an attempt to secure a stable position in society. It situates the alternative voice in relationship to political and cultural constructions.

Within Villar Raso's novel, the Moriscos' existential anguish at being multicultural also appears in their new environment, North Africa. At the beginning of their exile in Morocco, the last of the Hispanic-Arabs again suffer humiliation and dislocation in a place expected to be safe and comforting. Their cultural and social idiosyncrasy yet again caused them to be marginalized. Their present entails disgrace because they are still perceived as the "Other" by the now dominant Islamic society. The misery and desperation that they experienced encourages the reader to re-examine of his own and the characters' fundamental nature. The reasonable sense of security of being connected with the motherland can be erased. As readers, we start to wonder about this possibility and the consequences that an unwanted exodus would have on our communities. In the new context, the stereotypes of being traitors and dangerous Muslims assigned by Christian Spain can no longer be applied to the Morisco community. They are now perceived and they perceived themselves as exiled Spaniards fighting for survival:

Había españoles deambulando perdidos por todas partes. A la salida de Imzuren éramos trescientos y en Talamagait quinientos que nos arrastrábamos por un desierto estéril, yermo en toda su extensión y del color del fuego, salvo hacia el paraíso blanco de montañas que se divisaba al fondo entre nubes, también iluminadas de color rosa, en el que teníamos puesta la vista y hacia donde marchábamos. Nadie protestaba o se extralimitaba en las palabras y, aunque seguían taciturnos y melancólicos, la larga marcha, el hambre y el agotamiento mataban la imaginación y acababan con los pensamientos incluso de los más ambicios. (137)

1.2. Violence and the Crisis of the Human Essence

The dominant order's historical self-representation of being the defender of the authentic faith affected the relations between Christians and the minority groups. Vitality and lethargy, stability and chaos organize every detail in the life of Diego/Yuder. Such variable factors are apparent in the harmful effects of the Christian dominated environment on the Moriscos' psyche.¹¹

Las Españas perdidas condemns violence. The narrator presents the late Sixteenth century period in Spanish history as an allegory of the central power's brutality with the intention of emphasizing the irrationality of rampant coercion. The suffering of the Moriscos' culture allows the narrative voice to re-evaluate the official historical discourse in its relationships with non-Christian minorities. Diego/Yuder describes a chaotic society incapable of guaranteeing a peaceful existence for its citizens. Without distinguishing ethnic differences, bigotry constantly affects the inhabitants of Cuevas del Almanzora. In every corner of the Moriscos new universe, there is hostility and disregard for sacred places, gender and age. Violence among neighbors is reciprocal:

Todos juntos, cristianos nuevos y viejos acudieron a la iglesia para rezar por ellos y fue en medio de la ceremonia cuando una Torres llamó a Fernando Alfanegrín perro sarraceno y éste le respondió desde las últimas filas que ni era perro ni sarraceno, sino tan cuevano como ella y mejor soldado que su marido, que en la paz de Diós descansa, quien nunca le había servido con las armas, liándose una trifulca terrible en la que se maldecían, golpeaban y perseguían sin que hubiera alcaide, alguacil ni cura capaz de poner orden. (105)

From a disenfranchised perspective, the narrator illustrates the arbitrary brutality that imperialism has historically concealed. Diego/Yuder's words

challenge the cultural supremacy of the oppressors and the desire for ethnic uniformity. As the reiteration of emotional coercion remains in the Moriscos' consciousness, the description of racial confrontation and of a forced impotence documents the absence of understanding and the lack of equality. Reflecting on violent behavior, the narrator illustrates fundamentalist Christian conduct:

Luego marchó sobre Pina, que tenía una población mixta de moros y cristianos, y respentando a los cristianos, arrasó a los demás en número de setecientos. Así las cosas, las muertes eran frecuentes y los caminos impracticables. Por todas partes surgían organizaciones, dedicadas a matar, que asesinaban a los que podían sin respetar a niños o a mujeres. (63)

Villar Raso's irony operates by injecting his text with subversive images that make the readers empathize with the Moriscos' situation. The narrative voice rejects fanaticism and intolerance, deconstructing grotesque brutal acts that appeared in conventional historical sources. The violence that Diego/Yuder sees around induces him to reject the vicious suppression of the minority ethnicity; his anguish and refusal to conform display his people's suffering in his changing world:

La caza había comenzado y cualquier morisco fuera del lugar, por cualquier camino, senda o vereda, podría ser prendido y desvalijado y, si se defendiese, matado sin incurrir por ello en pena alguna. Se podía matar con impunidad a quien enterrase o escondiese su hacienda por no podérsela llevar; a quien prendiese fuego a sus casas, sembrados, huertos, bosques y arboledas. A los niños menores de diez años se les permitía quedarse como esclavos en casas cristianas. Este fue el edicto que a tantos en Cuevas abrió los ojos. (65)

In its ability to shock the reader by means of associations of hatred and human relationships, Villar Raso's work allows the narrative voice to respond to ethnic cleansing by illustrating and confronting discrimination. By speaking on

the Moriscos behalf, the narrator contests the logocentric violence exhibited and reveals a transformative vision of religious interactions and social disturbances. Diego/Yuder equates his presentation of violent behavior with a figure that personifies the official discourse and its destructive practices. Don Marcos García Mazambrón, a former priest of Cuevas del Almanzora, promotes the persecutions. The narrator recalls one dramatic event that took place the day of his first communion. In this passage, he denounces the abandonment of basic Christian values by the Church as represented by the priest. Now, the Church is no longer committed to love, respect and human goodness but, rather, it has divided men into the hunter and the hunted:

El año de mi comunión, las vehementes pláticas en cuaresma de don Marcos García Mazambrón encendieron a los cristianos de tal forma que diez moriscos murieron en Las Cunas. <<!Qué las llamas del infierno lo persigan hasta el fin de los tiempos! Más le hubiera valido volver al arado con sus hermanos>>, dijo mi padre aludiendo a sus raíces campesinas. Muchos murieron en las colinas, dejando atrás mujeres y niños y los hubo que se barricaron en las cuevas de Rumaida con los ojos encendidos en sangre y también los que se fueron para siempre a los caminos con las capuchas puestas dispuestos a matar.(36)

The violence incited by the priest in the masses is diametrically opposed to stated mission. In addition, images of bloody eyes and heads hidden under hoods point out how persecution transforms human beings into beasts. As the victims of physical brutality, the Morisco minority becomes an active participant in this vicious cycle of violence.

1.3. Opposition between City, Ethnic Origin and Individuals: Land and Family as Elements of Resistance against Violence

The factors and circumstances that surround the narrator's community have had a destructive impact on their living conditions and on their uniqueness as an ethnic group. The social problems of the time are just a reflection of violence. Given this aberrant vision of the past, Villar Raso offers Diego/Yuder the opportunity to shake off his antagonistic environment, leading to an order of questioning that makes strong demands on the readers. The narrator's views on aggressive behavior denounce the imprisonment of the Morisco population in a degraded space, a former earthly paradise. Holloway describes and analyzes Brian McHale's conception of postmodernism that contains an ontological orientation that examines the validity of the stable world, the participation of the complex and fragmented subject in its existence and the transgression of the types of cultural world and its consequence.¹² Applying these critical concepts to the narrator's observations, we can say that Diego/Yuder employs a transgressive language of violence against the stereotypical representations of the dominant culture with a deliberate exposition of the agony experienced. The use of his uncle Hierónimo's thoughts nostalgically reveals a rich, timeless and perfect epoch while a brutal deception takes him back to his volatile and unwanted present:

Escuchó los primeros gallos y luego oyó disparos de arcabúz, sueltos y espaciados.<<Es una maldición>>, pensó, <<Mis ojos han visto agonizar ciudades y caer imperios. Granada ya no es el paraíso. Antes lo era ...
Hubo un tiempo en que mandaba nuestra gente en esta tierra. Los limoneros y naranjos florecían con exquisita fragancia. Las lluvias caían mansas y empapaban la tierra y nunca se oyó decir que le faltara agua. Los árboles se movían a su tiempo y hora, y la hierba renacía en primavera ¡Dios Todopoderoso, qué plaga nos has mandado! Hoy ni los animales

hambrientos se la comen>>, pensó con amargura al ver a la yegua con la cabeza levantada, << porque cuando aparece el sol la agosta y quema de raíz. Y así con los hombres, que nunca como ahora han menospreciado tanto sus vidas. (16)

The vitality of the natural cycles, epitomized by the exquisite fragrance of the orange trees and the tender new grass, clashes with the suffering and annihilation of the subjugated ethnicity.

The Morisco community is terrified by this world. Violence constitutes an abuse of humanistic principles that deeply affects Diego/Yuder's physical environment. The grandeur of the kingdom of Granada with its beautiful palaces, fertile irrigated areas and botanical gardens disappears from Villar Raso's narrative. The conquered city is now a metaphor for enmity, corrupting the authenticity of its people. The very unavoidability of hostility has escalating consequences on those who have suffered the most. The material and psychological displacements endured provoke a constant transformation of the basic parameters of their simple existence. The destructive behavior inflicted by the conquering civilization has transformed a proud community into insensitive gargoyles: "...pero hoy las casas eran piedra sobre piedra, las almas se habían vuelto granito, y ni siquiera los amigos de la familia, que seguían siendo muchos, hubieran escuchado los golpes" (16).

The narrator attempts to neutralize the collapse of his culture through the importance of the role of land and family. The individual has a decision to make; either he faces life with fear and with constant deceptions or he opts for an uncertain, conflictive, but freely chosen future. His only possibility is to embrace human relationships and his roots that allow him to survive. In opposition to the

cruel image of Granada with its continued deaths, his connections to the Cuevas del Almanzora and its community allow the Morisco to construct his identity and self-esteem. The essentials of an uncomplicated life relate him to human existence: “el alma se aferra a la tierra, al aire, a las cosas familiares que ama más que al oro, a las parras de la huerta, al pozo, al banco de la plaza” (17). The symbiosis between man, nature and the simple components of daily activity deliberately illustrates his wishes: dignity, identity and emotional equilibrium. As opposed to the independent, completely constructed and self-assured dominant voice, the marginalized subject’s conscious state opens a harmonic space with objects that surround him; that is, the timeless image of a personal atmosphere:

Nuestra casa, situada a las afueras del barrio cristiano y a igual distancia de las cuevas de Calguerín, era un edificio cuadrado, con una torre mudéjar y un patio interior en el que había una palmera gigante, plantada por el abuelo y que por las noches cobijaba cientos de pajarillos y muchas flores y arbustos adosados a las paredes y que daban un olor muy fuerte a jazmín y galán de noche, especialmente intenso por las mañanas. (81)

The narrator exposes violence by contrasting his safe space with the pandemonium of the outside world. The acceptance of imperfection, complexity and the transgression of social and historical boundaries demonstrate pragmatism and humility.

Diego/Yuder and the Validity of his Story: the Deconstruction of Reconquest and its Consequences

The centralized discourse controls the meaning of the past. Speaking from a unique position, the narrative voice in Las Españas perdidas threatens the authorized version of the nation’s foundation, deconstructing the mythological production of the Reconquest. When Fátima Serra discusses the ideas of myth and

the formation of History, she identifies both concepts as the ideological premises that have characterized Spain's political construction from the time of the fall of Granada. Serra points out the way novelists in democratic Spain, motivated by the desire to present an alternative way to write the past, explore myth and history in their works. She also explains how Franco's fascist ideology acquires the principal characteristics of Imperial Spain by rejecting the nation's multicultural diversity. On this subject she affirms, "La esencia de España estaba ligada directamente al concepto de unidad y éste al deseo de convertir a la nación una vez más en un poder imperial" (77). Since post-Reconquest Spain was born out of ethnic conflict, Villar Raso recovers a heterogeneous past needed to refute social and cultural traditions that have produced a monoethnic image of the country. His critical evaluation of a unique vision of Spain as a homogeneous nation bestows Diego/Yuder's search for sincerity and solidarity with an authority that reinforces his position as a trustworthy representative of his people's experiences. His discourse undermines depictions of Moriscos as depraved and insurgent beings; unfit to form part of Spanish society.

1. The Reconquest and the Voice of the Other: Peripheral Perspective of Spain's Unification. The Minority Voice as a Reconstructing Agent of History

Over the centuries, historical texts have represented the voice of the "Other" in pejorative terms. It has been oppressed, neglected and denied freedom of expression. The Moriscos version of their fatal expulsion from Spain has not been heard. Henry Kamen describes and analyzes the historical actions that led to the formation of a homogeneous Spain during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella.

He also speaks of the major changes and controversial issues that characterized the Habsburg regime: the religious wars, the role of the Inquisition in ethnic cleansing and the infamous expulsion. Regarding the living conditions of the Moriscos, the following excerpt from Kamen describes the victimization and the emotional, physical and material discrimination they suffered:

In the three quarters of a century preceding their expulsion, Moriscos were the principal victims of the Inquisition of Granada, Saragossa and Valencia. In twelve “autos de fe” known to have taken place in Granada between 1570 and 1580, a total of 780 persons, or over 78 per cent of the accused, were Moriscos. In the tribunal de Saragossa between 1560 and 1614, 56.5 percent of the accused were Moriscos [...] In 1556 the Moriscos of Aragón agreed to pay an annual tax of 17, 800 reales to the tribunal of Saragossa, provided no confiscations of property were made because of heresy. (175)

In Mythologies, Barthes establishes an equation between myths, history and the cultural foundations of beliefs. Rejecting the concept of fanciful epitomes, he sees the mythos as a precise image that contains within itself a specific meaning, revealing a set of universal truths. The French critic characterizes it as the preferred discourse of History since it denies ambiguity and the possibility of alternatives. In Spain’s past, official politics and intellectual institutions have assigned generation after generation, legendary characteristics to the Reconquest and its consequences. They have separated the central concept of the traditional Christian Spaniard from the peripheral specificity of the Moors, the Moriscos and the Jews.

In Las Españas perdidas, the union of Spain under one religion has lost its mythical aura. The narrator’s bitter vision of the past differs from the idealistic official image of post-Reconquest Spain. His story dismantles the project of one

ethnically uniform state. The narrative voice involves all the cultural categories that enable a new discourse of history to be formulated by means of the deconstruction of the emblematic axes of barbarian behavior. His discursive method neutralizes the apparatus of the dominant system, revealing it as a mechanism of annihilation. In his last years as pasha in Timbuktu, Diego/Yuder recalls the struggle for survival among his community experienced in the kingdom of Granada. The Morisco narrator presents a changing world in which all the principles that had maintained order and harmony have been eradicated. Obligated to make decisions against his will, he recovers the image of a deteriorating lost paradise—his life before the inhuman expulsion—where the future was unsure. As the narrative voice shows, the peripheral individual, forced to become accustomed to an unnatural world, appears cornered and scared, living an abject life. Unjust horror, slavery and death now condition the formation of Moriscos: “Desde la caída de la ciudad, un siglo atrás, su vida había sido una batalla continua con la esclavitud y la muerte. Los crímenes eran diarios y no habían pueblos que no contaran sus muertos por decenas” (17). Although physical and psychological hardships are uninterrupted, Diego/Yuder’s reflections on his community’s calamities constitute a psychological victory over its social deprivation.

Mikel de Epalza analyzes the life of the “cristianos nuevos de moro.” He studies the demographic distribution of the Moriscos in Spain, their social and economic situation and their relations with the Christian society. He notices that their legal status given by the crown provided them with the same rights and

obligations as the others members of society. Epalza also points out that the persecution of the dominant social order forced the Morisco community to abandon their land and their homes. Of special note, he identifies the expulsion with destierro, (“exile”):

La palabra expulsión refuerza el concepto de destierro, de lanzar fuera de su tierra, y de exilio, instalación en lugar alejado de ella ... la expulsión indica el final brutal de los moriscos. Socialmente, es la eliminación de una minoría por una mayoría, en la sociedad española de su tiempo. (11-2)

Applying Epalza’s words to the critical discourse of the narrator, we can see that the latter considers the official reasons for the expulsion as partial explanations. Diego/Yuder displays a deconstructive notion of the dominant ethnic subjectivity and disregards social and religious inadequacies as the sole reason for the Moriscos’ persecution.¹³ From his point of view, the causes for their constant discrimination were also cultural and economic:

Las mujeres que habían ido a los oficios con sus maridos se aferraban a ellos y mordían y arañaban a los soldados. Las que se habían quedado en casa les decían adiós desde las puertas de las tejedurías, desde las vallas de las huertas o los seguían a distancia gritando ... Los cristianos querían toda la tierra para ellos, y los echaban de su ciudad, de sus tierras, de sus casas. (16-7)

Las Españas perdidas creates a description of the Reconquest and the cohabitation between Christians and Moriscos which follows Hutcheon’s conception of postmodern fiction. Hutcheon refers to postmodernism as a critical revisiting of and ironic dialogue with the past that interrupts and diminishes the absolute ideological premises of the dominant order, and especially the State.¹⁴ The narrator’s perspective of the ethnic relationships between conquerors and the people that they subjugate dismantles the principles in structure and nature that

made Spain homogeneous through the unification. The disruptive consequences of the Castilian control of the kingdom of Granada from 1492 to Diego/Yuder's present orchestrated the obliteration of Morisco's culture.

Examining at the question of authority from the perspective of the disempowered, the main character's words deconstruct the Habsburg Empire's political and social foundations. The declared "objectivity" of dominant power appears as a destructive cultural paradigm because it must silence alternative realities that would question its absolute certainty. The narrator establishes his consciousness as a subject by confronting the dynamic of violence that has characterized the experiences of his ethnicity. Connecting with Hutcheon's critical methodology, his discourse disturbs and weakens absolute principles by unhinging any physical and psychological harmony that could logically develop between individuals and their surroundings. The narrative voice rejects the privileged epistemological and political position of those who control and dishonestly benefit from the conditions of producing and holding power:

La realidad cotidiana, el pan nuestro de cada día, era el hambre y el terror a las masacres y a la esclavitud, a los azotes y a una muerte que podía sobrevenir en cualquier momento y de una forma inesperada: por parte de los cristianos que habían matado a más de trescientos, por la peste, que a principios de siglo se había llevado a seiscientos, por unas inmisericordes expulsiones que pendían de continuo sobre sus cabezas. (35)

By its own enunciation, the minority discourse confronts the antagonism suffered, which allows the reader to hear about and to understand the notion of subjugation.

Villar Raso notes the degrading behavior of the Christian invaders and he reveals the ways society's treatment of this ethnic minority ignores all moral principles. In order to demonstrate how this pitiless repression affects social

interactions, Diego/Yuder introduces the character of Luis de las Cuevas, a Morisco thoroughly converted to Christianity who functions in society as a Catholic priest. Through the religious man's words, the narrator develops a critical structure that evaluates the annihilation of the minority community. As an extraordinary paladin for the poor and the needy, de las Cuevas always tries to find a common ground between Christians and Moriscos, which would hypothetically form the basis of unified Spain: "Tenía los ojos vueltos hacia la tierra y era infatigable acudiendo en socorro de los heridos, pidiendo y robando secretamente para los pobres y hablándoles a todos, cristianos y moriscos, con la misma dulzura" (36). His vision of humankind assumes the underdog's perception of a wounded culture. Disappointment and frustration mark the description of his experiences since the world is, as he puts it, "una feria llena de saltimbanquis, estafadores, charlatanes, locos y fanáticos" (38). As perceived as the eternal "Other", he, tired of fighting for a lost cause, refutes the official view of this historical period by recognizing instead these events as cruel and unjust. By revealing the Christian hatred for manual labor, the spirit of truth moves toward an alternative for the textual reality: "Sólo entienden de matar—le dijo a mi padre—de matar y de acaparar tierras, porque luego tienen a menos arrear burros y tirar del arado. Salvar al país es más importante que defender la justicia del reino—decía pesaroso" (38).

2. A Postcolonial Reading of the Relations between Moriscos and Colonial Granada: a Revaluation of the Subjugate Minority Voice

Diego/Yuder's view of history reveals a marginal register of cultural harassment and political disturbances. His revisionist approach scrutinizes the

means by which the dominant culture exercises its power over the minority. After the fall of the kingdom of Granada, the Muslim community lived in a state of colonialism controlled by forces commanded by the Catholic Kings. As part of this oppressive state, the cultural authority of the new Christian officials of Granada instituted ways of domination in order to transform the habits of the conquered ethnicity into Christian ones.

The use of postcolonial theories is pertinent in order to observe the obliteration of the official discourse and recover the cultural pluralism of Spain. Literature raises a variety of issues such as racial identity and exile. Postcolonial studies disrupt the dominant imperialist subject and accord importance to alternative forms of discourse. They open a field of inquiry and understanding of the West's system of scholarship, following a period of relative closure. The postcolonial perspective focuses mainly on the revision of politics, economy and identities undertaken by the silenced and displaced voices. This theoretical approach deconstructs imperialist and colonialist mythologies such as the idea of oneself as a Subject-in-time and the highly developed versus the underdeveloped world colonized.¹⁵ By exposing a culture's colonial history, postcolonial theory empowers the society to value itself. As Edward Said has argued, "ideas, cultures and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force or more precisely their considerations of power, also being studied" (5).

As a colonial force, the Christian society in Spain has sustained an unequal distribution of political power, employing aggressive social, cultural, religious and economic means of control. Jean Plaidy has studied the formation

and expansion of the Inquisition as the fundamental repressive tool of the ethnic cleansing in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Spain. He reveals that the major participants in this process believed in their capacity to save the minority communities through their cultural and physical transformation. Plaidy shows how the so-called Morisco laws psychologically and emotionally changed this ethnic collective, altering the basic conditions in which they lived:

In spite of past promises, the Inquisition was installed in that town [Granada]. The familiar pattern began to take shape, beginning with the term of grace for all those who could come forward voluntarily to confess their heresy. People were now urged to commence spying on one another. It was not necessary for Moriscos perform actions which obviously proclaiming them to be Mohammedans [...]; they could be condemned for abstaining from the eating of pork and the drinking of wine or for staining their nails with henna, or singing Moorish songs, or even because of the way they slaughtered animals for food. New laws were made for the Morisco. They must leave their door open when they celebrating wedding or on feast days, so that at any moment a spy could mingle with them to discover if they were following any custom which could make it necessary for them to be brought before the Inquisitors. They must be no wearing of Moorish garments, Arabic must not be taught or used; at every birth a Christian midwife must attend. (95-6)

In Las Españas perdidas, in order to counter the repressive colonial discourses, the narrator displays the savagery that the dominant order employed to undermine this minority's social image. While re-evaluating the concept of the subject and existing ethnic relationships, his accounts advocate for the emancipation of difference, favoring cultural practices that arise in response to the antagonistic reality. Diego/Yuder maintains an incessant cross-examination of restrictive traditions, reconsidering the validity of the conventional production and dissemination of historical information. He distinguishes a moment of consideration and a moment of retrospective, demanding a place for security and

historic justice for the voices that had been silenced: "...hasta que el canto se convirtió en un clamor que ascendió a histeria colectiva y todos gritaban y se tiraban al suelo bajo el dolor de los culetazos, ¿qué pecado hemos cometido? ¿no es la tierra suficientemente grande para todos?" (18).

As the "Other" has essentially appeared as an inferior, Imperial Spain has possessed the normalizing rule of colonial segregation, that is, the maintenance of its own and primary signs of identity through its dominant specificity. Recalling the negative effects of the Inquisition on his community, especially as related to his father's trial, the narrator refutes the derogatory proclamations of the majority against the Moriscos. Diego/Yuder evokes the judicial procedures and the people who were subject to them, remembering the injustices inflicted on future allies and enemies such as those of Antonio Guzmán, also known as Ibn Guzmán, Cristóforo and Miguel Limpati:

De Almería, adonde llegamos de noche, salimos quince entre ellos Miguel Limpati, de corazón tempestuoso y a la postre de tristísimo recuerdo, aunque valioso en el azaroso mundo de acción en el que entraba. La Inquisición, ¡Dios borre su recuerdo de nuestras memorias para siempre!, le había quemado a su padre y era un criminal nato, sin otra idea en la cabeza que la venganza. (133)

What is most damaging to the official perspective of the past is the narrator's parodic exposition of the atrocities suffered. Connecting with principles of postcolonial theory that empower a society to analyze itself from within while maintaining a conscious estimation of its colonial history, displaced voices of the minority in Las Españas perdidas revisit the economy of culture and the concept of racial stability, a discourse that the dominant center had suppressed. His description maintains a critical differentiation and a humoristic separation,

deconstructing the imperialist and colonist power. The narrator exposes the impossibility of an apparent cohabitation, where ignorance and prejudice marked the relationships between Moriscos and Christians. The violence remembered by Diego/Yuder reveals a disconnect between the Moriscos's persecution and the anticipated protective actions from the Royal Council on behalf of the minority voice as accorded by Las Capitulaciones de Santa Fé ("the capitulations of Santa Fe").¹⁶ By allowing his audience to read the thoughts of the social, political and spiritual leaders of the newly unified Spain regarding the racial "problem", the narrator ironically evaluates and reviews the grotesqueness of their beliefs. Their solutions to such a "repugnant" social anomaly connect with the marginalized voice's dramatic description of mass murders. The narrator challenges the *status quo* by revealing the absurdity of their arguments and actions; a decisive approach designed to redress the imbalance caused by the distorted historical representations of the Moriscos:

El consejo real debatió nuestra suerte durante mucho tiempo: Al cardenal de Toledo no le parecía cristiano castigarnos como apóstatas, porque a la multitud siempre se le debía respetar, pero sí era de la opinión de afligirnos con perpetuo miedo de pasarnos a cuchillo, ignorando así la voz cuerda de Juan Albatodo, hombre muy docto y a quién, según Cristóforo, todos tenían en alta estima dentro y fuera de la Compañía, que defendía la integración pausada y lenta, pero inevitable, de nuestros moriscos[...] el condestable de Chicón sugería la idea de mandar a los fuertes a galeras y a los incurables y a las mujeres a la Berbería, reteniéndonos a los niños como esclavos, solución a la que se oponía el Duque de Lerma, señor y dueño de muchos vasallos. Según el de Alba, otro de los grandes, los moriscos merecíamos la muerte porque ofendíamos a Dios al andar en correspondencia con los de Argel y el Gran Turco, apoyando su postura el condestable de Castilla pero añadiendo que, de realizarse la matanza, convenía hacerla entrado el invierno y aprovechando la flaqueza del turco. Urgía, en su opinión, la masacre, con preferencia a la expulsión, la castración masiva o la dispersión por los distintos reinos de España,

porque sería una obra de gran edificación para los fieles y un aviso para los herejes, cada día más activos y presentes en la vida del reino. (63-4)

Diego/Yuder emphasizes the contradiction between their stated beliefs and the cruel drama of their actions. He questions the impartiality of the cultural heritage assimilated to the present day, disturbing the official history's version because his own method of presenting the past reinstates the forgotten and unheard. He believes that cultural diversity must confront the validity of a sole national culture. By introducing Diego/Yuder's demands, Villar Raso displays an emotional compensation for the rejected and abused "Other", re-enacting his personal story and establishing the social and historical significance of his community.

Las Españas perdidas examines a society that has constantly denied individuals the basic elements for human development and suggests the absurdity of history's monolithic perspective. It also allows the main character to question the conventional mechanisms of the past. Transgressing and subverting the image of the Center as culturally superior connects with Said's ideas and postcolonialist demands on the narrator's political evaluation of imperial domination and race. The dissolving of ethical and cultural parameters that justify central authority reinforces the dynamism of his critical discourse: domination itself is just a negatively motivated political and historical effect. The narrator questions the social forces and cultural negotiations that operated against the solidification of the subjectivity of the Morisco community and abolishes the detrimental images imposed upon them by imperial powers:

Se decía entre los moriscos que eran fáciles de matar cuando iban cargados de botín y muchos morían a manos de mujeres que les atacaban los ojos con polvo y luego les acuchillaban los caballos. Álvaro Flores y Antonio del Avila con otros doscientos perecieron en Válor de esta manera ... Las mujeres y los niños se vendían por miles. A los fuertes les ataban las manos y los pies y los enviaban a galeras. Seguía los ejércitos cristianos una multitud de mercaderes que compraban en el lugar todo lo que caía en sus manos, bienes, ganados y esclavos. (113)

Diego/Yuder's descriptions destabilize the political and intellectual structures and the authorized speech of the past, disputing the viability of its permanent subjugation of marginal voices. By accentuating the harm done against women and children and the dehumanization imposed by the ethnic majority, the narrator subjects Spanish society of the late Sixteenth Century to a drastic historical revision.

Las Españas perdidas, the Construction of the Imperial Spain and the Story of Moriscos: Subverting the Standard Composition of Identity

1. The Moriscan Voice and the Spanish Empire

The Christian victory and the unification of the peninsular kingdoms have traditionally been presented as the crucial moment of Spanish history. Official and academic discourses have relegated the period of Arab domination and the Hispanic-Arab culture to a simple hiatus in an otherwise homogeneous historical development.

In Sixteenth Century post-unification Spain, the Moriscos are typically portrayed with negative characteristics, such as being disloyal, unfaithful and treacherous. They have never been considered major actors in the nation's military activities of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries. Incapable of being

seen as independent subjects, Moriscos have been presented by historians as disabled, unable to operate actively and freely within Spanish Christian society in any social sector or cultural project. The official authority has used this categorization to justify their expulsion for the benefit and the grandeur of a homogeneous Spain.¹⁷ Villar Raso recovers the silenced impact of Moriscos in particular historical events parallel to the formation of the country as a powerful state.

In Las Españas perdidas, the narrator explores new possibilities of representation needed to subvert the conventional ethnical foundations of the logocentric order. Within his autobiographical discourse, Diego/Yuder achieves a decent, yet complex image as a literary character and as a human being. The constant search for identity and a rightful place for his community were his principal objectives. He is conscious of the limitations that he has to overcome in order to reach a place where his words can be heard and understood. While his discourse establishes a system of values that authenticates the Morisco subject's uniqueness, his personal account also destabilizes textual restrictions that have silenced minority voices. His uncle Hierónimo, his uncle Gonzalo and his uncle Álvaro represent clashing complexities that affect the legitimacy of society's historical structures, allowing a new deconstructive process of the traditional configuration of the past. They constitute points of resistance that are needed to confront the institutionalized annihilation experienced. The transcending effect of these characters facilitates a critical strategy that overcomes the mutilated identity of Moriscos.

2. Hierónimo and the Comuneros War: Morisco's Active Participation in the Making of History

Villar Raso turns to characters who engage in nonstandard behavior against the imposed status quo and who functions as a cultural challenge to the official historical account of the past. In that Diego/Yuder's discourse deals with social struggles, racial extermination and marks of identity, the author revalues the type of subject that Hierónimo offers, disputing the minority voice's representation as it appeared in the canon. Although the narrator has sadly expressed the reality of his dying world, his community's participation in the construction of Spain as a unified state implies a ritualistic rewriting of the nation's history.

The events that took place during the Sixteenth Century are a consequence of the Western world's geopolitical transformations, both within and beyond of the nation's borders. The social conflicts that occurred in the heart of the newborn Hispanic Empire marked the beginning of the Hapsburg dynasty. With the arrival of Carlos V as the new king, the Parliaments of Castile and Aragon faced political restrictions that substantially decreased their importance in domestic civil administration. Such situations opened a phase of animosity toward national and international political programs proposed by the Hapsburg king. This dissatisfaction was manifested in the form of an uprising and the subsequent war, La Guerra de las Comunidades o de los Comuneros ("the revolt of the Comuneros"). The urban elites protested the undue foreign influence contained in the domestic policies of the monarch. The Castilian rebels presented numerous petitions to King Carlos in an attempt to reach an understanding on political

matters and mutual respect. Among these petitions were the immediate end of the use of personnel from outside the nation for public offices and the end of state-run monetary reserves employed to sponsor political and military campaigns in Europe, mostly in Germany and the Netherlands.

The wave of civil disobedience ended around 1521, with Carlos V's victory over the rebels, which constituted the beginning of political and economic centralization in Spain.¹⁸ Villar Raso's new reading of the marginal situation of the Moriscos calls into question the legitimacy of the past created by the official versions. Diego/Yuder's uncle Hierónimo and his military background under the Hapsburg regime raise doubts about the cultural proclamations that have negatively characterized the members of this ethnic minority.

The narrator challenges the centralized system by linking his uncle with los Comuneros' war in Renaissance Spain. In that official historiography has omitted the participation of the Moriscos in these wars, Diego/Yuder recuperates their important role in the consolidation of the Hapsburg's political order. Talking about the transformative process that his community has experienced as part of its involvement in Spanish society, he questions the epistemic value of their frequent characterization as disloyal and notes the significance of the integration that the minority voice embodies. In Diego/Yuder's description, Hierónimo's contribution subverts the hegemonic concept of political and cultural unity. His involvement shows great determination to erase the systematic accusation of being an isolated human collective that barely interacts with its changing environment:

Vivían con ellos, y con ellos habían luchado en las guerras comuneras del lado de su majestad—tío Hierónimo calzaba todavía las botas de

soldado—, pagaban impuestos, sufrían azofras y servían al rey y a los señores, ¿qué pecado habían cometido? (19)

In his search for recognition, the narrator portrays his fellow compatriots as socially integrated as any member of the Spanish society. By their achievements and activism, the omniscient narrator states the importance of his people in political events and demands a moment of historical gratitude.

3. Gonzalo or the Intellectual Morisco and Soldier: Subverting the Canonical Renaissance man

In addition to Hierónimo, the narrator's uncle Gonzalo also represents a character integrated into the Spanish society, and thereby constitutes a possibility for being categorized as a subject within the parameters of the dominant order for individualism. His intellectual capacities undermine the establishment of the Christian dominant system, incorporating an alternative perspective on Spanish history and the social cohesion of the nation. Since Gonzalo stands above the official view's negative representation due to his military past and his constant desire for justice, he signifies a new way of transcending the depiction of Moriscos as insignificant characters who refused to integrate in Spanish society.

Uncle Gonzalo becomes noteworthy for his self-esteem as a Morisco and as a servant of the crown. His qualities allow the narrator to present him as the necessary intellectual mechanism for foiling the premises of the official discourse. He represents the ethnic minority's wish for peaceful cohabitation. Diego/Yuder holds Gonzalo's values as the ideal of perseverance and dignity, as an aspiration to be seen, respected and widely accepted:

... y su ocupación favorita era emprender pleitos y perseguir deudores hasta exterminarlos dentro y fuera del pueblo ... cualquier motivo era suficiente para llevar al juez al culpable ... No lo entendía. Era un maníaco de la justicia y se dejaba la sangre en defenderla. (29-30)

As an honest man, he helps to revitalize the image of Moriscos and to defeat the repressive cultural forces that placed his community in a marginal space.

Gonzalo is the reverse of Hierónimo. In Las Españas perdidas, with the narrator's recollection of Hierónimo's reasons for being in Granada and his interview with the Inquisition, Gonzalo's depiction is distinguished by his education, which many full-blooded Christian envied, and for his passionate and fierce personality:

Las dos primeras les había costado cuatro mil ducados y un año de cárcel para Tío Gonzalo, hombre de leyes, licenciado por Salamanca, ahora las tierras no valían ni un maravedí y lo habían mandado a él (Hierónimo) a negociar por ser un hombre sencillo y sin bilis en la sangre.(21)

Presenting his uncle's story authorizes the narrator to overturn the degradation that the Moriscos as a subjugated people have experienced. What allows Diego/Yuder's narration to question the historical annihilation of this community is the fragmentation of the features of the national identity that Gonzalo promotes. The examination of the principles by which history has been written allows the deconstruction of values and social paradigms. In Villar Raso's fiction, Gonzalo subverts what the past has negated, silenced and persecuted. He transgresses the conventional pejorative depiction of his community as an isolated stratum of Spanish society and as associated with the Ottomans, which casts direct suspicion on its loyalty. Diego/Yuder portrays him as an outstanding individual due to his great intellectual competence and his zealous sense of pride.

Even as a Morisco, his capacity for erudition and his educational background, normally a symbol of cultural supremacy, make him a talented Renaissance man capable of using both the sword and the pen:

Tío Gonzalo había estudiado en Salamanca y sabía tanto de leyes como cualquier cristiano. Había corrido Flandes, Alemania e Italia, la mismísima casa de Dios, y tenía una carta personal de Adriano VI en la que le llamaba “hijo carísimo” y eso le hacía creerse invulnerable a la Inquisición y no dudaba en enfrentarse a los Benavides y a los Fajardos, que si ellos eran nobles e hijosdalgo, por empuñar armas y mancharse con sangre puritana, el era un Cervantes, emparentado con los Guevara y tan cristiano y virtuoso como ellos, y tenía tierras que no se cansaban de producir frutos, sin los que ellos no medrarían ni podrían ser guerreros, porque tenían a desdoro cultivarlas. (30-1)

Villar Raso's revisiting of the past gives legitimacy to this figure and his community. The Morisco's integrity transcends the standardized binary oppositions active/passive and subject/object that maintain the cultural and social status quo. He becomes a valuable model of a commendable citizen. He traveled over half of Europe, he served his country with honor and he proved that he deserved better than anyone else to be called Spaniard.

Hutcheon sees in postmodern fiction a refusal of the stability of absolute ideological values through a re-evaluation of history and a dialogue between the past, its fundamental institutions and the human subject. To the extent that critical paradigms can be applied to Villar Raso's fiction, the alienated image of Moriscos can no longer represent Gonzalo. His attitude and his *modus operandi* destabilize the artificial “Other” image that has been conceived from the outside, and restores the cultural incompleteness that the minority voice has suffered. Although social and political turmoil impede lasting and positive resolutions to their constant

harassments, Gonzalo's actions undermine the fundamental indicators of the dominant society. In opposition to the systematic marginalization of his people for reasons of ethnicity and customs, he takes the initiative to revalorize the principles of individuality and difference. He points out that understanding among cultures is necessary for the development and the stability of Spain as a powerful nation. As a lesson for the present, his determination to defend and care for the wealth of cultural diversity invites a reconsideration of the traditional subjugated role that society has assigned to the peripheral voice:

No son Dios—gritaba—y si les hacemos frente se darán cuenta de que no es posible gobernar sin justicia. Tenía ciego el sentido. Reunió a los alféquies de Vera, la Calahorra, Moxácar y Lubres, doce en total, y con ellos redactó escritos a la corte; solicitando se revocaran edictos anteriores en el sentido de que no se podían cambiar las ceremonias y creencias de los moriscos de la noche a la mañana, así como cargarlos de servidumbres nuevas, siendo cristianos y habiendo servido a su majestad en revoluciones. (32)

By means of Gonzalo's inexorable attitude, Villar Raso assigns Diego/Yuder an assertive intellectual agenda that defies the Moriscos' historical defamation. By authenticating his story as an alternative to the traditional conception of the past, it deconstructs the cultural archetypes that have pejoratively singled out peripheral characters as disloyal sub-subjects, incapable of adapting to their new environment.

4. Álvaro and the New Challenging Aspects of the Morisco's Participation in the America's Encounter

The alternative voice of Moriscos insistently seeks out special marks of identity that can prevail over the subjugation that they endured. Diego/Yuder again surpasses the literary and historical limited images of Moriscos by

incorporating into his accounts a vindicated narrative force in the character of his uncle Álvaro. The oldest brother of his father becomes a defiant subject due to his participation in one of most the most profoundly transformative events in history: the encounter between the Old and New World. His literary construction helps to develop safe spaces for the elaboration of alternative conceptions of the subject.

Diego/Yuder's narrative portrays Álvaro as an exceptional figure, an integral element in his counter-discourse. His uncle's condition complicates and undermines social struggles and cultural annihilation that configure the traditional Morisco's characterization, questions conventional principles of object, subject and ethnic relationships. Although Álvaro epitomizes a discriminated minority within Spain's historical sources, the sharp contrast between his actions and the role of the official authority parodies the political and ethnic structures within society. The first Christian governor of Cuevas, a stranger in Granada, is the satirical epitome of power. The alternative voice challenges and dupes the established figure of authority, making the uncle a symbol of social and cultural survival. Diego/Yuder's thoughts about his uncle's popular characterization destabilize the official legitimacy, questioning the ideological validity of racial relations:

En mi niñez, tío Álvaro, el mayor de los cuatros hermanos de mi padre era un leyenda en Cuevas por haberle robado cuatro esclavas moras a Juan de Benavides, nuestro primer alcaide cristiano, y de él se decían las cosas más asombrosas, según el estado de ánimo del que hablaba o las visicitudes por las que atravesaba el pueblo. (25)

By transmitting from the past the reality of their cultural experiences and a collective and individual conception of the world, Diego/Yuder offers a vision of

the development of a new concept of human beings. The narrator focuses his attention on microhistory. He follows the clues expressed by the new image of the subject, that is, the impossibility of creating a particular individual with a predetermined definition. Álvaro represents such a subject because his personal story runs parallel to the “conquest” of America.

For the ethnic minority, migration to the Americas was an opportunity for social improvement that was not open to all. During the Sixteenth Century, social, economic and ethnic limitations restricted departures to the new continent. For Jews as well as for Moriscos it was almost impossible to prosper in the new lands as a member of the military or as a private citizen with a desire for fortune and wealth. The only ways for the individual to obtain an authorization to leave were either by proving the purity of his blood going back several generations or by paying high prices for the one-way ticket to the New World.¹⁹ It is documented that many intellectual descendants of Jews and Moors tried to make the trip and their requests were denied, as was the case of Miguel de Cervantes. Within Diego/Yuder's narration, Álvaro's arrival in the Americas destabilizes and threatens the internal organization of the dominant system. His presence in the New World celebrates a subversion of the established racial conception of society, by allowing novel representations for his ethnic group. In Las Españas perdidas, the narrator's adolescent memories of his father's oldest brother configure the necessary conditions for a Morisco discourse capable of creating a new perception of the marginal voice through nontraditional channels, and supporting the ethnic

minority's individuality. Diego/Yuder's uncle is the quintessence of what historiography has rejected or incorrectly represented:

Yo no llegué a conocerlo pero su nombre se asociaba con El Dorado ...
Porque regresó de las Américas en dos ocasiones. En la primera, repartió oro como si fuera un califa, el pueblo fue una fiesta y los mil quinientos vecinos de la villa se aprestaron a seguirlo. Era un hombre de gran fantasía y locuacidad y hablaba de aquellas tierras como si fuesen suyas o una porción de cielo que le estaba esperando. (25)

Opposing the determinist narrative, Villar Raso's work allows a referential space for the subject's self-expression of that which was traditionally silenced. Diego/Yuder illustrates with Álvaro's experiences how the past contains diversity. His participation in the expansion of the Hapsburg Empire in the New World deconstructs the logocentric dominant order. He constructs a sympathetic representation in order to shake the emotional and concrete bars that restrict his world.

The absence of Moriscos from official records contrasts with the reality of Álvaro's participation in the Imperial project of the Hapsburg dynasty. The presence of Diego/Yuder's uncle in the New World demonstrates the multiple possibilities of revisiting history. The accounts of Álvaro's experiences undermine the meta-representations of the American conquest. His story ties in with the principles of Lyotard's critique of the dominant aesthetic, the legitimating myths of modern times as well as with the Western meta-narratives. In Villar Raso's novel, the reconstruction of the past events is located within the micro-stories, the everyday experiences and the private anecdotes that confront society's exclusivity and the canonical discourse. The intellectual questioning precipitated by his uncle's American quest can be correlated with literary works

that have emphasized alternative representations of historical episodes. For instance, we can see that the narrator's analysis establish an intertextual dialogue with Bernal Diaz del Castillo's line of thought in La verdadera historia de la conquista de la Nueva España. Despite the distance of time between the two works, both present a re-examination of cultural structures from the perspective of the peripheral point of view:

De él se decía que había corrido por tierras de Guanaquil con un tal Zanduendo sin recibir nada sustancioso mientras a su alrededor los jefes se engrandecían, expuesto a las fiebres, las picaduras de las serpientes y las flechas, suerte natural de los soldados, pero que cansado de no medrar se había pasado al Perú, donde había hallado una provincia muy rica en oro en la que había hecho fortuna. (25-6)

Although his presence in America achieves a radical emancipation from the traditional depiction of the Morisco minority, Álvaro experiences cannot be characterized as a complete success due to the ensuing consequences of his second return to Cuevas del Almanzora. The social isolation and emotional displacement that the Moriscos suffered make for an asphyxiating environment that reduces their opportunities for creating distinctive independence and survival strategies of the peripheral character. The second return of Álvaro implies within the text a combination of the search for the configuration of autonomous subject and the disillusion resulting from human limitations. As a result, he is forced to face and suffer physical and psychological transformations and rejects ethnic and social norms:

Cuando regresó la segunda vez era tan pobre como ellos y lo único que tenía era una gran llama interior y una barba tan grande que tuvo que presentarse antes sus hermanos para que lo reconocieran ... Algo le había sucedido en América que lo había disgustado consigo mismo y con la

empresa imperial y que explicaba aquel celo religioso tan fuerte ... Tenía para entonces la cara amarilla como la cera, ojos saltones de búho y las manos larguísimas. (26-7)

Nevertheless, the fact that Álvaro appears to visit the new world twice symbolizes a personal possibility for individual improvement even for a Morisco. The logocentric order restrains individual or groups that represent an alternative to a homogenous society by assigning them an inferior ontological status of cognitive development. Diego/Yuder's description of what Álvaro has been through challenges such categorizations while it renews the possibilities of a self-sufficient subject within an arguably immobile society. The narrator uncovers, in his uncle's experiences, an awareness of the distinctive possibilities necessary for the revival of a heterogeneous discourse, which can lead to a demystification of the central ideology. Diego/Yuder's memories offer an alternative to the exploitation that the hegemonic system applies to the individual and his or her destiny; Álvaro has the opportunity to convey and temporarily enjoy the most precious gift of all: the possibility for individual and collective freedom and the ability to choose his own destiny, no matters what the consequences may be.

BOABDIL OF GRANADA: SOLITUDE, POWER AND HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION IN ANTONIO GALA'S EL MANUSCRITO CARMESÍ

Presentation y Organization of El manuscrito carmesí

1. Contrast between La Españas perdidas y El manuscrito carmesí

In Las Españas perdidas, Diego/Yuder's explanation of the events that surround the ethnic extermination of the Moriscos challenges the official construction of the past and rewrites what tradition has represented as the life and experiences of his community. Villar Raso allows Diego/Yuder to criticize the social systems of power that have blocked and invalidated the configuration and the marks of identity of this minority voice and its participation in Spain's multicultural heritage. Struggling to overcome the designation as the "Other" within Spain, the Morisco's discourse requests and promulgates a re-evaluation of the historical anxiety and punishment they endure.

In El Manuscrito carmesí, Antonio Gala presents an emotional subject whose life story reevaluates his historical, cultural and personal unwanted role in the unification of Spain. Gala's use of the last Moorish king of Al-Andalus as the novel's central character is unique. The externally imposed tribulations experienced by King Boabdil together with his attributes as a knowledgeable, sensitive and caring monarch distinguish him as the most tragic figure of the fatal year of 1492. His fictional autobiography sheds a new light on what cultural knowledge have designated as the essential nature of Spanish Imperialism.²⁰

2. The Historical Representation of Boabdil. Text and the Alternative View of the Spanish Past

Contrary to Villar Raso's depiction of Diego/Yuder as a constrained witness of a collapsing world dominated by social anguish, political coercion and religious repression, Gala's Boabdil is a character with apparent political power but is incapable of fully using it to control his realm. From his early years to his agonic present, the author portrays a figure that becomes a forced participant in the formation of the new Unified Spain. He appears as a puppet that is masterfully managed by historical circumstances and foreign power beyond his control. Solitude and ambiguity shaped politically and socially the king of Granada, constructing and elaborating little by little his supporting role in history. His inability to preserve intact the last Moorish kingdom while maintaining an ambiguous submissive-independent relationship with Castile completes his image.

In Historia de España y de la Civilización Española, the last years of the Nasrid kingdom of Granada appear as a turbulent period dominated by betrayal and temporary alliances. The pivotal presence of King Boabdil in the transformation and destiny of these Moorish territories is a complex one. Strategic treaties characterized by inevitable religious differences led to his depiction both as a hero and as a traitor. The king's image appears related to the political influence of others over him:

Pero a la vez que ésto ocurría, sublevábanse en Granada los hijos del emir, Abu Abdallah Mohamed y Albulhachach Yusuf, quienes temían que su padre los matase por instigación de Zoraya ... En tal estado de cosa, el rey Don Fernando, que empleaba en su política tanto las armas como la astucia puso en libertad a Abu Abdallah o Boabdil, considerándole como aliado y prestándole hombres y dinero para que recuperara el trono de

Granada. Boabdil pareció dispueto a ajustar paces con su tío el Zagal, reconociéndole como emir a trueque de ciertos territorios; pero a la vez facilitó a Don Fernando la toma de Loja (30 de mayo de 1486), según lo convenido en el tratado de alianza ... con lo que se encendió otra vez la guerra civil entre Boabdil y su tío el Zagal, ayudado áquel por los castellanos. (625-6)

The unfortunate relationship of King Boabdil with Modern Spain benefits the unification principles of the official discourse. His incompetence to preserve the kingdom of Granada under Muslim rule facilitates the political program of Isabella and Ferdinand. Western and Spanish historians thus portray how the Christian society perceived him: the easiest obstacle to overcome for the creation of the Imperial Spain. For instance, Luis Suárez Fernández explains how the Catholic Kings perceived Boabdil as the final step to Imperial glory:

Era el fin de la Reconquista, al cumplirse setecientos ochenta años, como recordaban Fernando e Isabel en una carta a la ciudad de Sevilla. Ahora, el matrimonio de los Reyes Católicos aparecía como una culminación para la heroica empresa que permitía restaurar la España “perdida” en el siglo VIII. Boabdil se instaló en Laujar, en las Alpujarras, sin mostrar la menor intención de convertirse. Fernando de Zafra, por encargo de los Reyes, trabajó con insistencia para que en octubre de 1493 se decidiera [Boabdil] por la emigración a África. (276)

His figure of impotence and loneliness and his tragic loss of power will play an important role in the construction of Spanish identity.

In El Manuscrito Carmesí, Gala proposes a re-reading of the historical actions that took place in Granada between 1483 and 1492. Boabdil’s presentation of his life from his childhood in the palace of La Alhambra, of his tragic memories as a king in a chaotic and changing universe and of his personal relation with history correspond to today’s postmodern reconsideration of the past. His complex perspective, which is situated outside of the official view, revisits the

end of the Reconquest, commanding a discourse that is consistent to the modes of speaking and writing of this critical theory. Realizing the importance of difference and the idea that history functions as a mixture of heterogeneous forces, the author presents an image of yesteryear in which there is room for plurality, for the forgotten and for the diverse.

Boabdil: the Voice of the Defeated and the Writing of History

1. El manuscrito carmesí: Introductory Reflections about Power and Canonical Knowledge

Antonio Gala's El Manuscrito Carmesí is a chronological recreation of the end of the Hispanic-Arabic era in Spain. From his days as a young prince in Granada to his experiences as a refugee in the kingdom of Morocco, the monarch appears as a powerless and exhausted witness of History. Although Gala transforms Boabdil into a fictional character, the author recognizes that historical texts have cataloged the monarch as the unpredictable scapegoat required for the religious and territorial unification of the nation. King Boabdil has come to be viewed as a marginal being in Reconquest Spain, both inside and outside the Christian realm of information. Gala uses a discourse that reveals the intrinsic aspects of the king's *modus vivendi*. His character possesses the capacity to recreate historical figures and political and social conflicts while expressing emotional responses about daily life's facts. The monarch of Granada thus communicates an alternative view of the lived events and reveals their impact on past, present and future generations.

The fiction enhances the way King Boabdil becomes the “I” narrator. He forges a well-wrought first-person narration and reveals his desire for forgiveness and reconciliation with different periods of his life. His story gives a glimpse into his psychological evolution and fills the gaps from other accounts left by traditional descriptions of his public and personal figure. As he reflects on his importance as a king and as a human being, he sheds light on all that he endured. His reflections offer a broad array of literary possibilities that range from his role as a head of state during the upheavals that surrounded the conquest of Granada to his views about life, his motherland and human relationships.

The king finds in his memoirs a way of making himself heard. By relating his experiences, Boabdil offers an alternative to the pejorative view of his image that the official History has perpetuated. His personal account represents those who have been prevented from speaking for themselves and contributes to the consolidation of his decentralized world perspective. The narrative voice thus encourages the reader to reconsider his traditional image as a crestfallen leader. In his article, “Historia e historia de una vida: El Manuscrito carmesí, de Antonio Gala”, Françoise Dubosquet Layris explores the literary relationships between the writer and his character and the importance of the king’s narrative role. She explains the reasons that motivate Gala to provide Boabdil with the opportunity to express his desires in life, and concludes that writing is the only tool that the king possesses to defend his unfortunate participation in Catholic Kings’ political project. For Dubosquet Layris, Gala offers the king a subversive discourse that challenges the conventional beliefs about the unification of Christian Spain: “Ya

no es el traidor o el perdedor retratado por los cronistas, sino el sacrificado en el altar de la Historia, que gracias a la pluma de Gala encuentra su defensa en el juicio de la Historia” (390).

From the beginning of his narration, one can observe a sense of defenselessness and apprehension in the king’s words. From his narrative present in the city of Fez, he appears as a fatigued and forgotten ruler without power and control. Because he is officially excluded of the political world, the former king counts on his story to attain a kind of moral liberation while he struggles to recover a lost sense of identity:

Escribo en los últimos papeles carmesíes de cuantos saqué de la cancillería de la Alhambra. Quizá sea un buen motivo para no escribir más. No estoy seguro-no lo estoy ya de nada-, pero creo que hoy cumpla sesenta y cuatro años. Desde que llegué a Fez mi vida ha transcurrido como un único día largo y soñoliento. (11)

The last Muslim monarch of Granada attempts to emerge from the pages of Gala’s fiction with dignity. The hostile environment that has surrounded him has also led an emotionally and physically impaired representation of human beings. Boabdil’s individuality enters into direct conflict with the official History. His unique view disputes the conventional mechanisms of knowledge and prevents that the voice of the “Other” from falling in oblivion. By giving Boabdil the opportunity to vindicate his place in history and explain from his perspective the fall of Granada, Gala engages in what Fátima Serra sees as a major trend in the novelistic production in Spain during the 1980’s. She observes that Spanish writers of this period rescue the traditionally peripheral voices and restore them to their rightful place in society. As Serra points out:

Ya no son pobres vencidos, subyugados y destinados a una marginación absoluta; se dignifica la existencia de los vencidos en la vida cotidiana de su reducido mundo. Se le enaltecen al otorgales victorias en el ámbito de lo cotidiano y devolviéndoles la capacidad de gozar a pesar de sus desdichadas vidas.(16)

Reacting against his categorization as an inferior being by the official discourse, Boabdil emerges from his account as a figure with a multifaceted personality who constantly searches for a logical and spiritual sense to this violent universe. By addressing himself to the hypothetical readers of his memoirs, i.e., the Hispanic-Arabic descendants of Al-Andalus, Boabdil avoids being perceived as a traditional “object” by explaining why he writes. There is a relation between Boabdil’s historical role offered by Gala and Dubosquet Lairys’s analysis of Boabdil’s purposes for revisiting the past. She confirms that the king’s reasoning accounts for his reevaluation of the historical truth:

Se trata de una verdadera re-escritura [de la historia] redactada a partir de sus actores, un pasado-recompuesto a partir de un conocimiento más objetivo, resultado de los trabajos heurísticos, pero que no deja de ser, a pesar suyo, subjetiva. Gala propone una versión de la historia contada por Boabdil, el perdedor. (393)

The words of the king of Granada materialize from a historical experience marked by suffering and loss. For Boabdil, writing is a cathartic ritual that confronts historical exclusion because his control of the narrative causes him to function as an oracle. His account thus becomes his last will for future generations in which his reasons for writing elevate him as a metaphor for those forgotten by history:

Considero útil que conozcáis la historia cognoscible de vuestra sangre, si es que la sangre puede conocerse. Afirman que toda historia se repite, y no es cierto: lo que se repite son los historiadores. Cuando se escribe a la

orden de alguien, siempre se acaba por escribir lo mismo: a los hombres los guían los intereses monótonos. La Historia la suelen contar siempre los vencedores—los vencidos, o no viven, o prefieren olvidar—, y en consecuencia la alinean siempre entre sus aliados. Supongo que si la escribieran los vencidos, sucedería igual; pero ellos la usarían para mantener sus esperanzas ... No es una historia de reyes la que os cuento, sino la de un testigo que, por ser el último, tuvo mayor valor. (19)

The king's words contain a double critical mechanism for transmitting information. First, the narrator contests the conventional approach to tragic events of his past. He disregards the “intereses monótonos”; which is how he categorizes the routine procedures of traditional historians and the explanations they normally give to events. His ideas about the transmission of information alter the ways a chronicler may create a text and communicate knowledge. Second, Boabdil celebrates the complex reality of his life, which contrasts sharply with the descriptions that appear in the official historiography. He does not simply want to focus his story on the general and well-documented conditions of an individual's existence and the destiny of nations. Rather, he seeks to revitalize the importance of eyewitness accounts of the past.

Critics such as Joaquín Valdés or Vladimir Svaton agree on the characterization of the historical novel as a hybrid genre.²¹ From the genesis of the historical novel in the Nineteenth Century, intellectuals have considered this genre as a recreation of events and circumstances as mediated by the writers' imagination. The “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” displays certain similarities with the traditional form but has a feature in that it brings together the past and the experience of the present, thereby allowing the recuperation of forgotten subjects. The information that was once banned and ignored possesses the capacity to

destabilize the opinions imposed on people and their communities by the official history. In Gala's fiction, Boabdil's voice examines monolithic discourses of contextual historical data in order to claim numerous possibilities to comprehend the past and the world. His text acquires the complete features of the autobiographical writing and seeks a validation of the emotional role of the anecdote, searching for intimate expressions that can modify the view of people in the present. Through the king's sensitive reflection on historical episodes, the reader has the opportunity to hear the existential questioning that he undertakes. Within this questioning, we see the connections between the reality that he is describing and our own present. There is a sense of universal preoccupations because our deepest fears and obsessions appear reproduced in his words:

¿Qué tiene que ver la historia con la vida? ¿Acaso la historia trata, ni le importa, de cuál es el contenido del corazón? ¿Habla de la aspereza del camino que se pierde de vista y que no vuelve? ¿Qué es la esperanza, cuando no queda la menor posibilidad de recuperación; cuando se derrumba los escombros de los recuerdos? ¿Es el hombre una historia coherente, o una sucesión de inconexos momentos? ¿Por qué se rige, qué persigue, o es sólo como un corcho que las olas trasladan sin objeto y sin término?(516-7)

Having fully assumed his own plight, King Boabdil attempts to make his history and culture widely known, by emphasizing his community's unspoken concerns and contributions in the formation of the past. In so doing, the narrator utilizes all his resources to protect and to conserve his cultural heritage. The basic humanity of his experiences contains the seeds to reconstruct the legacy of the Nasrid kingdom of Granada.

2. Boabdil and the Revision of the Chronicler's Functions: the Transmission of Historical Information

As we have previously seen in Chapter I in connection with the relationship between Urraca and the traditional chronicle, the conventional presentation of Medieval History has maintained an ideological link with the ethic principles of the crown. Traditional chroniclers have thus focused on Spain's past and the political and social success and religious values of its kings.

The intentions of King Boabdil's peripheral perspective run counter to conventional presentations of the past. His intellectual recovery of the Islamic legacy in Spain and its multicultural heritage challenges prevalent nationalistic discourses. Because the "I-author" entrusts the king of Granada with the ability to control the narration, the latter begins his story from the retrospective viewpoint of his memory that is supported in part by his own erudition and by his vivid recollections of his recent past. Boabdil begins his chronicle by writing on the reddish official papers taken from La Alhambra's Royal Council that constitute the last emotional link between himself and the land he left behind. His transgressive declaration defies the standard concept of recording and transmitting events. The king's fictional autobiography revises particular historical situations that result in a massive knowledge fragmentation able to affect the local and general environment of the recipients of the facts. It reveals an alternative, yet credible history of Al-Andalus, the one that incorporates a broader vision of the Spanish national identity.

In Los Moriscos del reino de Granada (1991), Julio Caro Baroja introduces the political situation of Granada preceding Boabdil's control of the

kingdom. He also notices the chaos that characterized the Muslim court and the dramatic military confrontations between the Catholic Kings and Boabdil. Caro Baroja describes him as “diplomático torpe y guerrero valiente, pero poco afortunado, intentó resistir e incluso atacar, mas todos sus intentos fueron inútiles” (40). The king of Granada’s story counters the apathy, the negativity and the segregation that conventional sources of information have associated with his persona and by extension with his entire community. He portrays a private reality that contains and, at the same time, defies the very same reality. Boabdil makes it clear that what he tells is an explanation rather than a justification of his actions. The reader becomes the recipient of Boabdil’s moral and theoretical discourse of the Hispanic-Arab population’s struggle for survival. The king’s story recuperates an individual and collective consciousness condemned to oblivion:

Se me ha injuriado como perdedor del Reino; sin embargo, nadie se ha ocupado de averiguar cómo fui de veras ni si luché con todas mis fuerzas, que no eran muchas ciertamente. A nadie se le ha ocurrido que acaso fuese yo—y no por rey—la mejor personificación de un pueblo condenado a abandonar el Paraíso.(21)

The king of Granada discusses and guarantees the impossibility of reaching a single and exclusive conventional truth. By evoking different interpretations, Gala’s fiction creates a new historical referent. Through the association of reconstruction and cultural survival, Boabdil creates a particular speech adapted by his personal references. His discourse rejects the partiality of conventional interpretations and in an act of emancipation and a new beginning offers a defiant heritage for posterity. The old king exiled in Fez, who joins the sultan of Morocco’s forces in a battle that may be his last chance for redemption,

adopted writing as a form of perpetuation and liberation. The clarifications he gives challenge the received views of his reign and his role as monarch, giving new meaning to his life. Beyond the hegemony of time and space, his chronicle becomes an additional act of utterance by allowing the readers in unison to see and to comprehend the emotional sequence of historical reevaluation. Facing future defamation both within and outside of his own cultural realm and the uncertain tomorrow of the Al-Andalus inhabitants under the control of the Christian monarchs, the Moorish king confronts the hegemonic methods of representing the truth and reality of the “Other”:

En la batalla próxima estaré al lado de quien me acogió (ni ahora ni nunca fui yo quien decidió las batallas): ya no queda en el mundo nadie que le deba más que al sultán de Fez, si no es quizá a vosotros, a quienes, imposibilitado de devolveros lo perdido, os obsequio con el relato de su pérdida ... Aunque debéis saber que en ellos sólo relato lo que fue; de lo que será nada sabemos ... Mi esperanza se ha muerto antes que yo; la que me queda es muy humilde: que este legado no testifique contra mí. (22)

The story of his life is his way to pay back what he considers his debt, which is the loss of Paradise. King Boabdil makes his peace with history and with the future generations of Andalusians through his writing.

King Boabdil constantly confronts historical facts that have been interpreted by an organized system of preconceptions. The apparent inflexibility of these materials is miles removed from the chronicle of his life. The events and causes of the fall of Granada and his relationship to history allow him to re-interpret the deeds, participants and the basic reasons why traditional sources of information have portrayed the past in the way they do. One of the most dramatic events that the king of Granada experienced is his baptism of fire, the battle of

Lucena.²² His participation in the battle becomes an initiation ceremony, a symbolic passage from adolescence to manhood. As part of the formation of his identity, the symbolic rite of war assists Boabdil in reconstructing the true meaning of the fundamentals of existence. His journey led him to reevaluate the genuine essence of humanity and his relationships with the world, with power and with political authority. As he struggles to find answers to his complicated situation, unacceptable violence and the contempt for life characterize the discouraging quintessence of human relationships:

Hasta ver lo que vi en el camino de Lucena ignoraba lo que es una batalla y por qué se guerrea. No es una cuestión de religiones, ni de ideales, ni siquiera de imponer por la fuerza nuestra religión o nuestros ideales; sólo es cuestión de ruindad y miseria: apoderarse de lo que otros disfrutaban, apoderarse de sus bienes y de sus posesiones, arrebatárselos hasta sus vidas para que no puedan defenderlos. La guerra no es un asunto de azar, como había creído hasta ahora, sino de carroña. Nadie hace la guerra por creer una cosa u otra, sino porque el enemigo tiene algo que él desea tener, y es por eso precisamente por lo que se llama el enemigo. Lo demás es mentira, lo demás son disfraces. (220)

Boabdil's review of the distorted and simplistic images of historical events produces a particular kind of articulation that begins with an analysis of the social relationships between Muslims and Christians. Two very important features mark them: cohabitation and war. After the military campaigns of the Catholic Kings in Malaga, the king of Granada evaluates the consequences of constant turmoil and chaos. The violent nature of the Reconquest that, for obvious reasons, affects both sides of the conflict and the role of political leaders in disrupting the normal life of their people are central to the king's evaluation. The narrator assumes the distress and suffering of his community and transforms their pain in his most

valuable argument. By analyzing the religious reasons for war, the reactions and sentiments of those who have to fight and the vulnerability of those who remain behind, King Boabdil thus doubts the true motivation and behavior of politicians and public figures, an argument which is also applicable to today's society:

Tiembla la tierra salpicada de guerras y catastrofes ... ¿Y quién las quiere? ¿Acaso los hombres que abandonan su casa y su familia, con el corazón volcado en aquello que abandonan? ¿Acaso los hombres a los que se convence de que Dios le exige matar a semejantes suyos en su nombre? ¿O las mujeres, enlutadas y viudas, que pierden en la guerra la mitad de su vida, sin la que nunca ya estarán completas? Quienes quieren las guerras son los mismos que tendrían que extirparlas y levantar las vidas de sus pueblos y mejorarlos y colmarlos de alegría y de luz y de prosperidad ... Antropófagos somos, como aquellos de que Muley me hablaba, devoradores los unos de los otros. ¿Quién habla aquí de paz? ¿Por qué no se puede conseguir la paz sino con armas? ¿Porqué las causas más hermosas no pueden defenderse por sí mismas?(342)

The alternative presentation of the Reconquest gives the peripheral character a new and profound justification and historical truth. This differentiated complexity of the king's account provides the reader with an opportunity to evaluate the complete picture of personal and popular life in this critical period.

As a chronicler, King Boabdil claims that his desire for life and his pacifistic and humanitarian nature organize his legacy. He wants the reader to grasp and accept the new knowledge he has to offer. His discourse calls into question conventional texts founded on scholars' traditional partiality when they present peripheral characters. The king is convinced that they will not be able to describe and portray his abilities as a caring politician and his nature as a profound and sensitive character: "En esta época, que ya es la mía, nadie como los poetas para inmortalizar bien una victoria, bien una derrota; depende de lo que se

les pague; o quizá de algo más, no estoy seguro, aunque temo que tendré ocasión de comprobarlo” (258-9).

Fearing defamation, he gives his own version, choosing to embark upon an alternative narrative: the king of Granada is the reader’s personal chronicler. Boabdil’s function as a first-person narrator allows the public display of the ontological power of writing. His subversive analytical method that pits him against the dominant homogenous culture makes us the empathetic accomplices of his story. Under the shadow of his incapability to freely exercise power and the pessimism that surrounded his reign, King Boabdil constantly reflects on his personal participation in the transformation of Al-Andalus. He reevaluates the image of silence that was forced upon him, thereby making use an essential technique that contests conventional depictions of his image for personal restoration. His intentions connect with Lyotard’s critique of the absolutist conception of the world and his revival of a perspective that lies outside of the established centers of power. Both theoretical precepts allow the reader to re-evaluate History’s universality. Applying Lyotard’s principles to King Boabdil’s discourse, we can argue that he can no longer be considered as an absolute and selfish ruler, who is attached to the establishment and only concerned about his own welfare. In a most precise and personal way, his words explain his broader interest in the safety of his community. His authority as an eyewitness reminds the reader of what happened and his story refutes the Christian cultural legacy:

Quiero dejar testimonio de que resistía tan sólo por mi pueblo, no por ambición personal alguna, ya que las contraprestaciones de mi rendición disminuirían más cuanto más las aplazase. Si hubiese sido mi idea

traicionar a los míos, más fructuoso hubiera sido para mí contentarme con los ofrecimientos del rey y no seguir luchando. (361)

The incorporation of traditionally excluded forces and fragmentary visions within the novel accentuates the importance of alternative constructions of reality. In order to deemphasize the characteristics of the logocentric discourse of history, Boabdil rejects the official function of the chroniclers. He subverts the conventional binary true/false and center/periphery oppositions that maintain the cultural status quo. He disputes the role of the historian and questions his intentions. Exemplified by his critique of the arrogance of those who supply information, his account deconstructs the inflexible validity of the transmission of information. King Boabdil thus reviews the legitimacy of chroniclers as the emissaries of cultural imperialism:

¿Quién avala a los cronistas? Uno de ellos eligió, hace mucho, un chivo emisario a quien cargar de culpas, y los demás se transmiten el error de uno al otro como quien transmite una herencia opulenta. La Historia lo acepta casi siempre, porque es lo más sencillo no contradecirse y no alterar el desordenado orden que alguien estableció, muy probablemente para zafarse de una acusación o aumentar su provecho. (255)

As the narrator, Boabdil escapes from the established system's *modus operandi*, and takes in a critical stance characterized by burlesque intentions. The king begins to consider the universe that emerges from historiography as simulacra. His criticism directly corroborates the hierarchical inversion of the social order and his analysis validates significant heterogeneous discourse. Boabdil questions the nature of truth and falsehood and the consequences of what the chronicler does and doesn't do with the information he has. As the teller of a particular story, he becomes part of the equation due to the fact he is a transmitter

of historical episodes. His story thus guarantees a multiplicity of meanings, and gives us as readers ground for exonerating and vindicating him. This is the significance of what he proposes. Since he realizes the ramifications of his job as a chronicler, he ironically criticizes his own functions and intentions as a writer: “comprendí que me había convertido en un cronista más, en uno que delata para liberarse de una recriminación o compartirla, y que se me habría podido hacer idénticos reproches que a los otros” (255). At the same time, the king’s literary experience calls the attention of the reader due to a special characteristic. Hayden White affirms the capacity of the historian to select and order historical events from a particular point of view and to question the importance of such events. White also believes in the historian’s ability to create a plot and an ending with his information.²³ Linking White’s conclusions with Boabdil’s questioning of the role of the chronicler, we can observe that the narrator has reservations about the authority of those who offer facts and wisdom as well as the true relevance of what should be told:

¿Para qué describir los caracteres y los reinados de los efimeros sultanes, que no duraron sino pocos días; ni los de aquellos que volvieron a reinar, después de destronados, dos y hasta cuatro veces? ... ¿Introducía algún elemento nuevo, sacaba yo alguna conclusión que de veras cambiara el curso de los sucesos o que los blanqueara y los santificara?(255-6)

The traditional chronicler’s incapability to accurately portray the peripheral view of history is a persistent theme in Gala’s fiction. In El manuscrito carmesí, the king of Granada establishes a close relationship with the reader through his fictional autobiography. Within Gala’s novel, other characters assume the possibility to criticize those who control, use and manipulate information for

political and economic gain. Literature possesses the capacity to portray ambivalent characters from the past that provoke polemic considerations about the veracity of cultural entities of the present. These characters become the beginning of symbolic expressions of a deeper critical meaning. One of these characters that questions and rejects the legitimacy of the discourse imposed by the Christian state is Moraima, Boabdil's wife. Throughout the novel, the daughter of Aliatar, the governor of Loja's territories, has been his faithful and loyal partner, his indestructible shelter who is always able to comfort his tormented soul. Moraima also represents a sense of equilibrium to his world and constitutes the king of Granada's most important source of moral and emotional stability. She has been compelled by her convictions to transcend her own interests and to identify with her husband's problems as if they were her own. This is reflected in her participation in Boabdil's public and private decisions. Regarding the Catholic kings' resolution to continue the Reconquest by any means, the king of Granada counteracts their intentions with his own vital and secret plan that he only shares with his wife: "Más de lo que ignoran ambos—y lo ignorarán mientras esté en mi mano—es que he tomado, de acuerdo con Moraima, una determinación no menos firme que la de ellos" (310).

Boabdil continuously remarks the importance of Moraima in his everyday life. She is a source of strong motivation based on a multiple view of cultural formation of the subject. The relationships between these two characters indicate a revalorization of female involvement in the daily aspects of life and the development of society and, by extension, that of history. Her importance resides

in her ability to speak, but also in her faculty for participating and being treated as an equal. As part of the capitulations of Santa Fe, King Boabdil must leave Granada. His family and he move to an area in the mountains known as Las Alpujarras. It is a turbulent and exhausting journey for the Muslim royal family. Cold, rain, melancholy and personal frustration characterized this trip. In addition of his account of these difficult conditions, Boabdil calmly evaluates his wife's qualities as a woman, as a partner and as a peer. His depiction of Moraima implies a transformation in the traditional condescending masculine view of women and forms the basis for a reconsideration of gender relationships:

El frío nos cortaba la piel. Moraima me inquietaba; pero cada vez que retrocedía para interesarme por ella, tropezaba con su sonrisa inalterable.- ¿Vas bien?—me decía ella a mí—. ¿Quieres algo? ¿Precisas algo?Entonces yo le arrojaba un beso con mi mano gruesamente enguantada. La noche la pasamos muy juntos. Éramos como dos beduinos que se aprietan bajo la congelación nocturna del desierto; éramos como dos compañeros de armas que ignoran lo que será de ellos en la jornada siguiente, y se estrechan el uno contra el otro para darse aliento y calor, y desentumecerse. (581-9)

Due to her identification with the King, Moraima possesses the capacity to dispute and defy the logocentric production of established historical records. Her persona is consistent with the alternative perception of postmodern criticism, depolarizing human constructions and finding common objectives that transcend sexual categories. Before his imminent departure to Africa while enjoying their last days together in their Laujar residency—Moraima never made the trip since she died sometimes before it—Boabdil and Moraima explore the meaning of time, the ways human beings perceive it and the different ways time shapes them. Boabdil speculates about the concepts of present and past. He sees the former as

the last stage of history and the latter as a human paradox. By establishing an analogy between the past and a mosaic, the king believes that it has to be contemplated from afar in order to perceive the operations and negotiations between human beings: “hasta que punto somos las minúsculas e involuntarias teselas de un mosaico y cómo es preciso retroceder y distanciarse para percibir con claridad su dibujo” (293). Moraima sees the past quiet differently. She conceives it as something between reality and fantasy because the things that have happened to us normally took place in a much different way than how we remember them. She concludes by defying the role of the historians and the way they will report the lives of the King and herself and the Hispanic-Arab Spain: “Toda historia—dijo Moraima y rompió el silencio—estará siempre mal contada, porque todo narrador elige siempre lo que quiere contar y porque cualquier cosa cabe dentro de cualquier historia” (583).

Controlling the narrative allows the king to reflect on the creative method and on the historical events he constantly reviews. He affirms that life can be remodeled from within, thereby creating a symbiotic relationship between theoretical inputs and the representation of history. The intentions of Boabdil’s description coincide with Hutcheon’s historiographic metafiction. For Hutcheon, postmodern narratives are self-reflexive metafiction and the use of parody and irony allows the writer to offer a reexamination of nature of the past. On this subject, she writes: “The intertextual parody of historiographic metafiction enacts, in a way, the views of certain contemporary historiographers: it offers a sense of the presence of the past, but a past can be known only from its texts, its traces—

be they literary or historical” (125). Boabdil’s account allows the reader to know his own past and to confront the assumed objectivity of the traditional sources of historical information. By stressing the relevance of unconventional explorations of texts, the narrator establishes a space from where simplistic and distorted representations can be erased. His story emphasizes the nature of fiction, the techniques and conventions used to write it, and his role as a literary creator. With great doses of double meaning and ironic hints, Boabdil’s statement is an attempt to destabilize cultural prerogatives and to enable a new way to writing history; that is, a subversion of the linear discourse of the past:

Procuraré ser objetivo, y no mezclar en el relato mis sentimientos de fracaso y decepción, la inestabilidad, e incluso el desequilibrio, que me poseían, y que me empujaron a mudarme, sin razones evidentes y con frecuencia, desde la Alhambra a la alcazaba del Albayzín, y viceversa. Procuraré enumerar los hechos de manera ordenada, si es que se puede enumerar con orden el desorden sin falsearlo: para describir los objetos que componen un informe, hay que extraerlos de uno en uno, individualizarlos, catalogarlos, aunque volvamos luego a revolverlos como estaban. (417)

Writing his chronicle and telling his story becomes his intellectual means of explaining his private deliberations and his relationships with a changing and unreachable world. His audience witnesses Boabdil’s representation as a complex character. For Gala, the last Moorish king of Al-Andalus rewrites history to disprove the tendentious accounts of his participation in the fall of Granada. By telling his story Boabdil, as the representative of a traditionally disparaged minority in Spain’s past, thus attains a sort of poetic justice.

3. The King's Narrative, the Establishment and the Redefinition of Alternative Perspectives

In El manuscrito carmesí, the perception of the “Other” refutes the centralized position of history. The expressed opinion of the peripheral subject alters authoritarian cultural representations. Since knowledge is filtered through official ideological precepts, the king's narration announces the approach of a conflicting era. Boabdil's fictional autobiography creates a narrative space where contrary to the logocentric narration of historical events, the truth is revealed as inherently unstable and shifting. His account is a response to an imposed reality, and offers an alternative analysis of the end of Al-Andalus.

The king of Granada's story interpolates a subversive agenda that deconstructs speculative unfavorable opinions of his world, his people and his truth. His discourse analyzes the clash between traditional and new peripheral values. He criticizes the Christian image of the Hispanic-Arabs based upon inaccurate stereotypes. The main purpose of his discourse is the introduction of a system of principles that authenticates his point of view. As a captive of the Christians in the castle of Porcuna, King Boabdil has the opportunity to examine the complexity of history. With composure and dignity, he critically questions the validity of established information. While reevaluating moral, public and political principles used by the power structures to elaborate a mythical image of society, Boabdil creates an analytical method that ensures the consistency of his thoughts and helps him to communicate significant characteristics of his ethnicity. The most pivotal is the anguished search for cultural uniqueness while facing the obliteration of his reign. He challenges the hatred and mistrust traditionally geared

towards Muslims by portraying the Christians' pejorative constructions of Islamic ethics and idiosyncrasy with burlesque features. The king observes the hidden motivations behind Castilian behavior and the reasons for the Reconquest as can be observed in this excerpt:

Son muchos siglos de ver en Andalucía el paraíso perdido como para que no miren a su rey con un sentimiento en que se mezclan el odio y el asombro y una inconfesable envidia. En su imaginación nos rodean leyendas, que sus gobernantes desde el principio fomentaron: crueldades atroces, costumbres decaídas, afeminamiento, personificación de cuanto les han enseñado a odiar y a temer al mismo tiempo; pero también somos lo que ellos, en su fuero interno, presienten que serían si se abandonasen a la vida. Es fundamentalmente por eso por lo que necesitan eliminarnos: porque constituimos el ejemplo de sus desmayos morales y de sus prevaricaciones, pero también constituimos la provocación de su curiosidad y su más alta aspiración secreta. (204-205)

The king here confirms in this parallel approach to both cultures what Deconstruction emphasizes as the impossibility of speaking about complete, absolute and stable characterizations. The legacy of the dominant voices occupies a disruptive space within the cultural system because of the unspoken desire of being what they despise. Boabdil's discourse against one solid and unitary truth corresponds with Derrida's critique of metaphysics' binary oppositions. The French critic questions the validity of such oppositions, as each term exists within a system of differences. No term can be understood without relating it to another. Therefore, there can be no absolutes, as each term contains traces of others. The apparent superiority of the Christians emerges through turmoil, revealing fear, admiration, envy and untold desire for that other. Boabdil's description of the two cultures points out the suppressed feelings of the dominant and powerful "Castilian Self", evoking from deep inside desires that connect with

the secretly admired and openly hated “Muslim Other.” This provocative portrayal facilitates a process of authentication and the restitution of the historical place that this apparently peripheral discourse deserves.

From the cell where he is confined, Boabdil is forced to create his own answers to fight the precariousness of his existence. In doing so, the king of Granada reconstructs the memoirs of his dynasty. He is persistently concerned about rightfully displaying the distinctiveness of the Hispanic-Arab heritage. As a method to assess the past, the discursive mechanism that the king uses for its rehabilitation incorporates a rational and an emotional confrontation between his unique view and the one of those that have controlled History. It is a double process for challenging the accounts of the past and of his present through the story he is telling and the memories he is recovering. Such process implies a subversion of the dominant order’s social, political and literary practices. Boabdil has the ability to fill in the lack of personal reactions and sentiments that are generally ignored in the official historical discourse. To this degree, he rescues the values and exemplary models that constitute his proud family’s past in order to contrast it with his dishonored and asphyxiating present. He goes beyond his personal limitations by identifying with figures that preceded him and thus offering an internalized analysis of his historical circumstances:

Empleé muchas horas—tardes y mañanas enteras—en redactar la Historia de la Dinastía. Consulté con meticulosidad los documentos enviados desde Granada; confronté unos con otros; agregué lo que en mi adolescencia había escuchado, lo que mi razón me sugería y lo que mi corta experiencia me apuntaba; pregunte incluso al alcaide, bastante versado en los dos siglos últimos, a pesar que tiende, como cada cristiano, a erigirse en su eje. Llegué a soñar, tan embebido estaba, con los Mohamed, los Yusuf y los Ismail que me antecedieron. A veces con tal intensidad me puse en su

lugar que conseguí explicar sus reacciones más inexplicables para los cronistas. (254)

Deconstruction shows the shifting features of truth. It is impossible to maintain knowledge as a constant, unchanging concept. Such instability can be seen in the way that El Manuscrito carmesí confronts the construction and the development of stereotypes. Boabdil's narrative contains a specific theoretical inclination: a tendency to demystify logocentric myths that have ignored Muslim Spain as an integral part of historical constructions. It rebuilds the productions of the past while challenging with renovated arguments the traditional Christian representations of his image. With the use of independent parameters to understand the relationship between time, cultures and individual consciousness, King Boabdil's fictional autobiography creates a compensatory move that displaces incomplete, imprecise, mythical and historical depictions of his persona and his life.²⁴ The result is a Boabdil's depiction characterized by emotive and personal features:

Amo y deseo la paz por encima de todo. La paz es la tierra en la que crecen nuestros hijos, y en la que nosotros somos de verdad nosotros mismos; es la rosa en la que caben todas las primaveras, y la auténtica benignidad de Dios; la huerta que trabajamos con sudor y cultivamos, y en la que hemos sembrado la esperanza.(341)

Stereotypes designate the images through which we categorize our personal and collective environment. They emerge as a necessary component to function in the world. Sander L. Gilman examines the links between the stereotypes of sexuality, race and madness. He observes the evolution of these concepts, their particular structures and their deeper representations, especially related to the formation of the individual's consciousness. He believes they are

the essential characteristics of the differentiation between the self and the “Other”, which represents images of things that “we fear or glorify.” Stereotypes materialize when the individual’s societal and political participation and the sense of unity with his surroundings is perceived to be in jeopardy: “They buffer us against our most urgent fears by extending them, making it possible for us to act as though their source were beyond our control.”²⁵ The king Boabdil’s observation of the birth of Al-Andalus recalibrates the complex principles of identity. He examines the foundations of the Hispanic-Arab nation from an insider’s point of view, building a new history through the deconstruction of stereotypes: The Arab invasion never took place in the way scholars from both sides have presented it. After Boabdil is taken back to the palace of the archbishop of Cordoba, he deliberates about the charisma of the city and the transcendent effects it has in his personality. The deep Muslim roots of the now Christian city, the influence of its serenity and its greatness produce a premeditated disconnection between his present reality and the past. Based in the combination of his own cautious investigation of documentation from the Royal library of La Alhambra and his critical inputs, Boabdil reveals subversive convictions derived from unique revising principles against the standardized representations of history. The contagiously self-assured and convincing optimism that proclaims the universality of one hegemonic view of yesteryear is losing power, prestige and control because of a permanent counter-authority:

La islamización de la Península—me entrego a escribir hasta que alguien me anuncie para qué me han traído—no se debe a una conquista árabe procedente de África. Trabajo me ha costado adentrarme sin prejuicios en

los textos, comparar datos y fechas, y procurar no abandonarme, yo también, a una idea preconcebida que demostrar. (326-7)

The concern and impetus reflected in his words shape the fragility of regulatory laws that can consequently have the gain of control and ultimately the dominion of knowledge. By a sense of its own mutability, the reconstructing interactions established between the alternative objectives of his story and the demanding centralized power show the infertile labor of conventional transmitters of historical information: “Ése suele ser el error de los cronistas, que a menudo no tienen más prueba de sus afirmaciones que el haber sido hechas de antemano por otros” (327). It is within texts and out of fixed preconceptions that we can best judge the hermetic representations of the world.

Historical validation of the traditional discourse disappears from the pages of Gala's fiction. The truth's apparent capacity for telling events that can consolidate the foundation of civilizations starts to collapse. Magnanimous revelations that support the strength of cultural propaganda seem now no more than childish stories. By discovering the means of articulating his life and his text, Boabdil's discourse reacts to all the facts that have made history in the way we know it. His intellectual contribution affects the two sides of the conflict, considering by unanimity the arrogance of the absolute influence of scholars. He scrutinizes every aspect of the Invasion that has depicted the Arab presence in Spain in mythological terms. From the improbability of the Arabs being so far away from Damascus and living among Bedouins to unreliable facts that present an army of only twenty-five thousands defeating and conquering ten million of Hispanic-Romans, Boabdil's story rejects with burlesque intentions the events

that Christian sources of information used to justify the sacred unifying role of the Reconquest. He doubts that a unique perspective can represent the past, making the traditional truth obsolete. For indeed his critical approach analyzes the role of Tarik, Muza, and Abd-ar-Rahman the first, the three fundamental players of the Invasion and establishment of the Islam in Spain.²⁶ King Boadil's motivations can no longer allow a fixable meaning of their presence under the spectrum of the official discourse. They lose here their values as larger than life figures. They are simply negated or merely reconstructed, given a new identity or image:

Siempre me llamó la atención el nombre de Tarik—heredado por Gibraltar, la roca de Tarik—tan ajeno a los nomencladores árabes y tan próximos a los germánicos. Los nombres de los reyes godos tienen terminaciones similares: desde Ilderik y Amalarik y Teodorik a Roderik o Don Rodrigo. ¿Quién podría ser ese general? (327)

¿Quién es—se me dirá—Muza, en tal caso? Pero ¿Existió? Según mis lecturas, contaba con más de setenta años cuando vino. ¿Qué caudillo con esa edad, se arriesga a tal empresa? ¿De dónde obtuvo sus ejércitos, aún tan reducidos como se asegura? De existir, Muza habría sido un santón o un predicador. (329)

¿Y quién fue Abderramán I el Emigrado? ¿Qué hacía aquí, en el extremo Occidente un omeya? ¿A qué venía? ¿Se significa tanto alguien que huye? ¿Qué representa su árbol genealógico? Y cuanto lo describen, lo describen germánico: pelo rojizo, piel blanca, ojos azules con los mismos caracteres que transmitió a sus sucesores. Para explicar lo inexplicable, a alguien se le ocurrió que su madre sería de raza bereber; pero ¿qué hacía en Damasco una bereber teniendo hijos omeyas? (330)

Boabdil's questioning of what history is and what the Invasion was affects the stereotypes of religion and language. He disregards all the realms of association established between intellectual aspects of civilization and power. Religion and language have been considered as basic components of the real and emotional world, providing fundamental imagery of the presuppositions of

culture. For the king of Granada, language, a system of references that creates the illusion of completeness, becomes a discriminatory feature. His discourse confirms that the Arab language is not a sustainable attribute for maintaining in the collective memory and in history the stereotyped construction of the Arab's conquest: "Muy despacio se instaló la cultura árabe; más despacio aún el idioma: los primeros Abderramanes no lo hablan, ni sus ministros ni sus favoritos, y a quienes lo hablan le llaman árabes sin serlo" (330). Religion also contains constant characteristics of a social pact. It is an institution and a consequence, a differentiation and a connection: a vacuum that implies cohesion and a centrifugal force that always functions independent of its source. For the king of Granada, Islam of Spain maintains the values of distinctive beliefs but completes itself with autochthonous components. In a way, Boabdil's version of Islam in *Al-Andalus* possesses postmodern elements such as popular and elitism, pastiche and heterogeneous:

Hasta Abderraman II, el Islam pasa inadvertido, y Eulogio II, Obispo de Córdoba, no se entera de quien era Mahoma sino en el año 850, y en el Monasterio de Leyre en Navarra. Y además al Islam se le dió en Andalucía una versión muy peculiar; abierta y comprensiva, proveniente de una mezcla de islamismo y arrianismo, fue una serie de preceptos de integración social. (330)

In Gala's fiction, the protagonist's discourse challenges scholars from both sides as carriers of knowledge, carefully examining their arguments. He explores the contradictory irresolution of ethical principles in a metaphoric process related to the social and political conflicts from the past and their effects in the present. Within a ludic spirit marked by recapitulating interconnections, Boabdil transgresses the limits of apparent immutable transferences of knowledge:

Pasado que fue el tiempo, a los historiadores de uno y otro bando les convino creer y hacer creer en una contundente invasion. A los cristianos, la irresistible fuerza del hundimiento, <<debido a sus pecados>>; a los musulmanes los glorificaba la portentosa rapidez de la conquista. Pero eso no se escribe hasta el siglo IX; son datos inventados: unos vienen del sur, por Egipto; otros del norte, por la crónica de un Alfonso III que, entre otros dislates, cuenta que en Covadonga, donde germina la primera reacción, murieron por milagro de Dios, que reajustó sus preferencias, cerca de trescientos mil árabes: milagro había de ser, puesto que ni había árabes, ni en aquel valle caben más de cinco mil personas. Qué torpe o qué ciego es el hombre cuando decide aceptar como ciertas las consejas que le favorecen, y destroza las pruebas que las desmentirían. (331)

Gala's intentions behind King Boabdil's attempt at critical historicism become now comprehensible for the reader. Such an inquisitive process allows his character to search for the answers of a complex and multipurpose question: What is the essence of an individual? What does it mean being us? In order to respond to such matter, he revalues the symbolic meaning of Al-Andalus. Boabdil thus reacts energetically, as reader and as writer, to the conventional codes that command a homogenous construction of Spain. As the king's portrait deals with the struggles of subjective and power depravation, he embraces multiculturalism and the revival of his motherland, Andalucía. His discourse suggests the beginning of new relationships with the autochthonous fundamental nature and new possibilities to understand the past and, therefore, to start to comprehend the present. It is the irremediable ascension of alternative perspectives. His deliberations contribute to the creation of a complex reality opposed to the traditional image of the nation and directly connected with its cultural components. Boabdil's arguments nurture the soul of his audience and confirm an

untraditional way to offer a harmonic space in which its parts produce multiplicity of meanings and heterogeneity:

Para saber quienes somos de veras hay que mirar mejor. La cultura y la arquitectura andaluzas—como demuestra esta mezquita de Córdoba—son las premusulmanas, con influencias de lo que luego se consideró lo mejor: lo oriental, lo heredado del legado bizantino y del persa. Aquí en la Andalucía donde nacimos los nazaríes, existió ya Tartesos, un pueblo cuyas leyes se escribieron en verso, y ni siquiera Roma la civilizó, sino al contrario: Andalucía le dió sus mejores emperadores y pulió a sus soldados; como le dio luego al Islam su más lograda arquitectura y su sabiduría literaria y científica; como le dió a Europa zéjeles y jarchas, y moaxacas para que sus trovadores se inspiraran. En Andalucía—conquistadora siempre de sus conquistadores, cuanto más de visitantes enamoradizos—convivieron todas las culturas, y en ellas se fertilizaron unas a otras y procrearon. Por culpa de la intransigencia de los cristianos por un lado, y de la intransigencia de los almorávides por otro, se apagó la hoguera maravillosa de una Península que, gracias a los andaluces, fue un faro deslumbrante. (331-2)

Boabdil's speech is a paradigm for social and spiritual reconstruction. The existence of a sequential process by which the king of Granada finds in his motherland self-esteem and energy transforms a restricted community in the paladin of diversity. The expressions "Andalucía le dió sus mejores emperadores y pulió a sus soldados", "le dio luego al Islam su más lograda arquitectura y su sabiduría literaria y científica" and "En Andalucía convivieron todas las culturas, y en ellas se fertilizaron unas a otras y procrearon" focus on the possibilities of historical breakthrough. Andalusia's physical and intellectual attributes exceed those of the same people that made her a marvelous land. It is a revealing and supplemental diagram for conceptualizing uniqueness and pluralism, a basis for a different understanding of the past. The king of Granada's teachings contains a double process of communication between the writer and the reader. On the one

hand, the writer, the author of a chronicle, establishes a personal analysis of his contemporary concerns. On the other hand, the reader observes these issues closely and the whole process becomes a justification for discovering his nature and that of his natural environment. Boabdil's fictional autobiography works as a metaphor for an alternative wisdom associated with history's rehabilitation and new cultural representations.

The conventional intentions of every narrator must deal with presenting a reality in accordance with the lived moment. In El manuscrito carmesí, the role of the narrator's production within the novel operates as an untraditional paradigm. Understanding that the king's discourse is a speech from an outside the establishment, Gala's character delineation separates Boabdil's alternative writing and his description from prior historical representations. Because his voice serves as the metaphor of Hispanic-Arab community, his account about the historical events that configured the unified Spain refutes the negatively assigned construction of his ethnic group. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann study the social construction of reality and the sociology of knowledge. They examine the foundation of knowledge in everyday life and in society as an objective and subjective reality. In their view, institutional activity is conceived as knowledge and is transmitted as such. On this point, they explain, "All transmission of institutional meanings obviously implies control and legitimating procedures. These are attached to institutions themselves and administered by the transmitting personnel" (71). Connecting these critical principles to Boabdil's contribution to an alternative discourse, we see how the transmission of information is linked to

structures of power that support and judge political positions. Boabdil's fictional autobiography adds an innovative meaning to cultural foundations of his image by offering relevant facts that go beyond his present moment and status. The intellectual quest precipitated by the military operations that are necessary for his survival creates new representations, information and discourses about the fixed categorization of the past. By including themes of freedom, hope and emotional independence in his message, the king forges strategies capable of producing positive responses in his community and of winning the reader over to his side. As an indicator of his own feelings, Boabdil's story rejects the conventional apathetic and disdainful images of himself and his ethnicity. The institution of the Muslim monarchy attached to his persona confidently reinforces his importance as a ruler and spiritual leader in the lives of his people:

Y todo este gentío, seguidor de sus caudillos y de sus alfaquies, vino a engrosar el no muy lucido ejercito que salió una vez más por la Puerta de Elvira. Era el atardecer del día más largo del año. Alzado sobre mis estribos, les dije solamente:-En nuestras manos está la gloria de Dios. Los que caigamos muertos esta noche sobre la tierra que pisamos y que nos ha sido arrebatada, presenciaremos mañana el amanecer en el Paraíso. (391-2)

Gala's novel offers unconstrained possibilities of judging the mythological foundations of the Christian Reconquest and its cultural implications. The traditional imagery of Hispanic-Muslims is an artificial and culturally imposed construction, a pejorative myth needed to affirm the validity of the Reconquest project and to secure the dominant "self" of the Christian victors. Jo Labanyi discusses the concepts of myth and History in the contemporary Spanish novel. Connecting with the ideas widely expressed by intellectuals of the Generation of

98 who dreamed about a united Catholic, immutable, mystical and warrior Spain, this critic observes the importance that the fall of Granada and the religious unification of the country had for Nationalist Spain's principles and propaganda. For the Regime that emerges after the Civil war, the unifying project of Isabella and Ferdinand contained exploitable mythological features: the unilateral and dominant Christian consciousness was equivalent to the origin or the pure and immaculate fundamental nature of the culture. Franco's dictatorship appropriated its foremost characteristics for the regenerative programs of the country. Such a process established an ideological link between the traditional doctrine of the Reconquest and that of the authoritarian regime since they both rejected the nation's multicultural diversity.²⁷ Gala's narrative recovers a past that is greatly needed in order to revalue the social and cultural traditions transmitted from institutional powers to the present. By transforming the fundamental nature of intellectual productions, the author establishes a constant dialogue between a renovated literary discourse that allows for the silenced voices of the past to be heard and the reconsideration of the historical events.

The king of Granada continuously fights to avoid political and ethnic failure. He confronts the official version of the past by reprioritizing the peripheral anecdote of those who were the victims of History. His story, as told by Gala, proposes a review of what scholars affiliated with the dominant power have emphasized as legitimate. Traditional accounts ignore and displace the images of those who experienced daily misery and struggle for mere survival. The knowledge contained in such disturbing images deconstructs the conventional and

institutionalized magnificence and legitimacy of Christian plans. During the siege of Granada, its inhabitants experience the most dramatic moments of their lives. Ignored by the official historiography, Boabdil describes the upheavals suffered and challenges the nature and meaning of his chaotic world, the actions of the invader forces and his own actions as a ruler. The drastic transformations of his people show how the forced isolation and the planned physical and psychological annihilation perturb the normal functioning of individuals within society. The concrete details of the suffering of his community compel the readers to reflect on the actions and consequences of the Reconquest, an activity that transforms an icon of the official history into a symbol of the suppression of cultural diversity. Transcending time and ethnic limitations, the considerations of the king of Granada thus question the capability of leaders of the past as well as those of the present to perform their duties regarding the welfare of their people:

El hambre, como consecuencia desatentada, hizo su aparición en este paisaje, incitando a quienes la padecían a una especie de locura. Los hambrientos se asomaban a las horas de comer, e imaginaban cómo se saciaban los cristianos de los alimentos que aquí carecíamos. Ver a las mujeres con sus hijos en brazos, por las callejuelas, voceando su laceria y su indigencia; ver a los viejos sentados al sol contra los blancos muros, resignados a una muerte anticipada contra la que no hallaban remedio alguno; escuchar a los más exaltados pedir que se abrieran las puertas, y se les dejara ir al real de los enemigos para rendírseles, todos eran cuadros que originaban en quienes gobernábamos—aunque, como luego diré, no en todos—graves escrúpulos en nuestras decisiones. (424)

The discourse of the dominant culture has created Boabdil's estrangement within a universe that confirms his cultural oblivion. The king of Granada responds to the methodical rejection and humiliation of his minority group with his story. As myth corrupts and manipulates History transforming the events that

make the world into images that suit those who can manipulate information, he vindicates his position by identifying mutual events to both cultures. He reconsiders mythological constructions of Christian Spain and its political and military supremacy through the recognition of common historical attributes. Parallel images of history and its most dramatic incidents join both sides of the equation through a mechanism of parity and the quality of their general experiences. Independently of the consequences of these particular episodes, he discusses the existence of a nation with a shared legacy of memories:

Que sea mayor nuestra afinidad con los cristianos de la Península que con los musulmanes africanos: la convivencia, aún la más agria y violenta, siempre da un aire de familia. En pro de esta opinión, he comprobado que arriba y abajo de la oscilante frontera, en toda la duración de la dinastía, se reflejaron los mismos avatares igual que un espejo. Si entraban los cristianos en épocas desmayadas, también nosotros; si en disidencias internas, nosotros también. Cuando, a principios de este infausto siglo, los castellanos se aferraron a la guerra como a un ideal caballaresco, nos equiparamos a ellos con la confirmación, paralela y vistosa, de la familia de los abencerrajes. (256)

With these moral and philosophical considerations, the narrator destabilizes the official presentation of the past by emphasizing periods of cohabitation and shared social behavior. Before political persecution and religious hatred silenced the vanquished and erased mutual links from the memory of the people, King Boabdil suggests a perspective of history that recognizes the contribution of other factors in the development of the Spanish civilization.

Boabdil and Identity: Constructions of the Subject and Power Relationships

1. The search for his identity: Individuality and Image

Spain's "*Nueva Novela Histórica*" confronts the referential values of the official discourse. The revision of the traditional approach to the past offers a plurality of possible readings of history, a demystification of the conventional hero and a critique of historical truth. In El manuscrito carmesí, the king's account contains the elements of a counterculture apparently in opposition to Castilian culture and offers a parallel view of the Hispanic-Arabic community and its uniqueness. Boabdil thus embarks on a personal journey to find the meaning of subjectivity and a quest for self-realization that becomes an analogy of the general struggle of the last Muslim Andalusians.

Subjectivity and consciousness have been considered the key factors motivating the writings of contemporary novelists. Critics have agreed that the crisis of identity and the writers' search for the true sense of the subject takes the form of internal examinations and psychological explorations on the part of literary characters. The inner reasons and the contrast between the individual and external forces develop the formative activities of the essential "self".

In El manuscrito carmesí, we observe how King Boabdil scrutinizes the main purposes of his existence and his role as monarch. Both his identity as a king and as a human being appear elusive. His development is always a step behind for what we can understand as a complete psychological configuration of a character. When Ciplijauskaitė studies the process of consciousness in the contemporary feminine novel, she emphasizes the importance of self-questioning for

understanding the complete meaning of the “self”. In these novels written by women and in which main characters are women, the novelists believe that knowing oneself is equivalent to comprehending one’s past. As Ciplijauskaitė points out:

Desplaza el énfasis del devenir social, activo al cuestionamiento interior. Para saber quien soy, debo saber quién he sido y como he llegado al estado actual. De aquí la abundancia de novelas que evalúan el pasado desde el presente, es decir, desde una conciencia despierta. (3)

In Gala’s fiction, Boabdil undertakes the same analytical inquiry into the distinctive construction of identity that Ciplijauskaitė sees in female writers and their characters.

Subjectivity is the accumulation of reactions to the different stages of human development. The importance of the individual’s experiences incorporates an intellectual and cultural challenge to possible imposed features on the acting “self.” Identity emerges from the constant struggles during one’s life. Boabdil’s continuous dialogue with the reader through the descriptions of his reign makes visible the painful solitude and annihilation that marks his social and cultural construction. With the use of philosophical deliberations about the trials of human existence and his rightful place in the world, the king of Granada attempts to explain the internal and external elements that affected the formation of his persona and the validation of his account. Since Boabdil is seen by the dominant order as a peripheral subject, the process of carefully considering the dominant power structures from his point of view allows him to ask for understanding and sympathy. The details of his perception about life and social construction of the subject thus reveal the reasons for his painful limitations. His first person

narrative presents the concern about his inability to autonomously take transcendental decisions. The result of a forced and imposed reality, the contrast between his lack of free will and his personal incapacity to exercise power, sheds a new light about how historiography has negatively characterized him as a spiritual and political leader. As his words echo into our present, he also questions the psychological manipulation that is imposed in individuals in a world wherein everything is already selected and packaged for consumers:

Nuestro destino se nos adjudica al nacer; se nos entrega, igual que la tablilla en que estudiamos de niños las primeras letras y sus combinaciones. El texto de nuestro destino está desde el principio escrito; lo único que podemos hacer, si somos bastante osados, es transcribirlo con nuestra mano y nuestra letra, es decir, aportar la caligrafía que alguien nos enseñó. Yo de mí puedo jurar que jamás he elegido. Sólo lo secundario o lo accesorio: una comida, un color, la manera de pasar una tarde. La libertad no existe. Representamos un papel ya inventado y concreto, al que nunca añadimos nada que sorprenda al resto de los representantes. (27)

Boabdil is a character that questions the validity of the received history and overcomes damaging perceptions of his image. Although Gala pushes Boabdil to maintain his critique of the official historical discourse, the king of Granada soon realizes that his quest for self-representation is a mission fraught with difficulty. In El manuscrito carmesí, we observe an effort to truthfully discover a model of emotional recovery that leads to the development of King Boabdil's subjectivity. Although the effort of the narrator is genuine, the combination of a desire for great deeds with his personal and social inability to accomplish them in his reality has a negative effect on the formation of his personality. Throughout the novel, Boabdil tries to dominate his environment and the circumstances of his life by confronting social forces that restricts his

functions. This strategy only liberates him partially from all the ghosts that haunt him, an outcome that frustrates his quest for self-esteem. Boabdil's identity is sometimes depicted by other characters and other times by his own introspection. The latter demonstrates his ability to control the narration and to present how he is always a step behind of what can be considered as an operative subject.

1.1. Fatima and Boabdil: Power Relationships and the Quest for Independence

The most powerful and detrimental influence in the formation of his personality is his mother Fatima. She represents a pessimistic input because she frustrates his attempts for self-determination and confidence. From the beginning, we observe a conflict between mother and son that will restrain his development as an independent subject. The first direct encounter between these characters takes place while they arrange Boabdil's wedding with Moraima. Gala contrasts the fragility of the king's personality with her assertiveness. The relationships established between these characters correspond to what Luce Irigaray understands as the development of subjectivity. According to Irigaray, men in patriarchal society are considered the creator and agents of social and political exchange and women simply represent commodities. In this society, Irigaray explains, "women exist only as an occasion for mediation, transaction, transition, transference, between man and his fellow man, indeed between man and himself."²⁸ For Irigaray, women must change social order by challenging their images as commodities and refusing to perform their established roles. Here, Fatima appears a thoughtful female protagonist, who maintains her distinctiveness as a powerful and authoritarian queen. She arrives on the scene as a constructive

force on the kingdom, but with a hidden personal political agenda. The queen has total control of the situation as a dominant character:

Yo tengo que defender mi fortuna: tengo que defender mis derechos, y por desgracia, ya que tú no lo haces, tengo que defender los tuyos. Eres mi prolongación y, dado el cariz de los acontecimientos, mi único medio de seguir en el trono, si hablamos claramente. Quizá con otro hijo me habría ido mejor...Mírame cuando te hablo, Boabdil. (30-31)

Queen Fatima sees Boabdil as another needed element to maintain the political machinery alive, a decorative ornament in the palace of La Alhambra that happens to be her son. There are no positive emotions towards him or high expectations of him. Her view of how the young prince, the future king of the fabulous Granada, should behave does not match the actual abilities of her son. Fatima's words express a sense of rejection and disappointment, as she makes patently obvious: "Sin embargo, no tengo más hijos que Yusuf y tú, y tú eres el mayor, qué le vamos a hacer. Es hora de casarte" (31).

The desire for power that Fatima possesses cleverly allows her to influence the chaotic world wherein Boabdil has to live. For the king of Granada, his mother's name is a synonym of the ultimate political machine: she is tough, impassive and a very manipulative and allows no room for mistakes. The narrator is able to portray the multiple sides of Fatima because in his text the social forces that she embodies take the form of human emotions and behavior. One consequence of King Boabdil's captivity after the battle of Lucena is the presence in the novel of *faux* Boabdils. The different political sides that can benefit from the charisma of the king of Granada create impersonations of him in order to control their political domain. Fatima reorganizes once more the king's

subjectivity by offering to her followers her own Boabdil. The king explains how she now controls the formation of his public image and his identity. This process reevaluates the relationship with his mother while she reconstructs the king's image as an alternative source of authority:

Ella por su parte ha lanzado la especie de que yo me había fugado, y de que me encontraba junto a ella, más entusiasta que antes del cautiverio, preparando una doble ofensiva: contra mi padre y contra los cristianos. Con el aval de su palabra, con la credibilidad que garantiza su presencia y contando con el fruto que, de ser cierto, el hecho le proporcionaría, mi madre ha conseguido que un tercero, también muy semejante a mí, se le reconozca como sultán en Guadix. (289)

His mother discounts him as a viable option for power and does not acknowledge his significance as the legitimate king. Fatima considers him a valuable material possession, only suitable for assuring the positive outcome of her agenda. By assuming a dominant position as subject, the queen reduces Boabdil to an object, thereby depriving him of his identity.

Extreme situations play an important role in the development of the subject. The awareness of characters as independent and complex acquires central importance in postmodern fiction; it is the foremost source of rehabilitation of identity that contemporary novelists possess. This process allows the readers to witness the character's transformation from an object into a self-determining subject. In Gala's novel, the unlikely possibility of freely acting as a person of his status affects the development of Boabdil's personality due to the obstacles that he faces in order to exercise power and leadership.

The elements that promote Boabdil as an independent figure deal with his relationship with his mother. The king must transgress the limits of the family

hierarchy in order to act as an autonomous character. He has to overcome his emotional and psychological dependency on Fatima in order to regain a sense of individuality and to put conscious distance between his mother and himself since she represents the symbolic order that impedes his development. Naturally, self-determination is a ghostly illusion that haunts the description of Boabdil as long as the shadow of his mother still hovers over him. The social and psychological reliance of the king on his mother continues into his life as an adult. In the last months before the fall of Granada, the Castilian troops establish a camp outside the city but close enough for its inhabitants to see it. One night a fire starts and as a result the Christians suffer a great material and human losses. The question for Boabdil was whether to attack the now fragile enemy or to conserve the last resources they had. The emotional separation needed by Boabdil to accomplish his legitimate personal and political consolidation never occurs. Fatima still sustains considerable power and undermines his authority by publicly questioning his abilities to govern:

Destruirlos—gritó mi madre, que pasaba de una almena a otra almena—
¡Destruirlos!... ¿Improvisar?—la cólera enrojecía más que el incendio la
cara de mi madre—Llevamos ocho siglos luchando. ¡Toca la alarma,
Boabdil! Manda tocar la alarma y que salgan los hombres para acabar lo
que el fuego ha comenzado. En la guerra no hay leyes. (407)

The presentation of his mother's conduct damages his leadership and his possibility of a full development. Within the society that has enabled him to attain the pinnacle of the power pyramid, Boabdil's figure is constructed in opposition to the male subject of lacanian theoretical system. For Lacan, identity is structured in gender terms, and women serve as the "Other." Here, the phallus is the

privileged signifier and holds the meaning-making power. Neither the male nor the female actually possess the phallus, but the male is able to identify with it more easily. Because of her authority and her capacity to command, Fatima seems in possession of the phallus and the king of Granada appears as the conventionally weak “Other.”

1.2. King Boabdil and the Complex Development of Individuality

The project of King Boabdil is clear: he wants to give testimony of the events that he witnesses and to examine the historical truth in order to recover the subjugated voices of the past. He presents a distinctive picture of the society of his time. The radical innovations of this picture depend upon the examination of the characters and the determination of whether they are portrayed as living, complex human beings. Although this complexity can be applied to Boabdil, the way in which the king of Granada is humanly and artistically understood can also confirm his powerlessness in his struggle for self-realization.

In El manuscrito carmesí, the narrator explains his failure to reach his full potential as an independent subject. The artistic representation of his reality portrays him as trapped in a continuous and unstoppable movement wherein his need for control and self-esteem continuously leaves his plane of existence. The narrator introduces his constrained personality through his confessions of his deepest feelings and fears to the reader. These confessions contain one positive aspect within his text; they present Boabdil’s control over the narration. Although he appears as an emotionally damaged character that is unable to fully develop his capacity, he challenges such restrictions by postmodern parody and irony. These

critical elements sow doubts about the objectivity of representations of historical personages and events. After a meeting with Ferdinand and Isabella wherein they the future of Granada is discussed, Boabdil muses about his own restricted nature, the true essence of the world and the objectives of politicians and their role on the life of whose they must protect. His words present a negative self-image of himself but the ironic treatment used to confess his limitations makes the reader understands the real forces behind the formation of his public and private figure. The development of his identity now involves a sacrifice for a bigger and better good:

Tengo, pues que fingir; fingir que sigo siendo como soy, aunque haya decidido, de ahora en adelante, ser ya de otra manera. Tengo que desempeñar mi papel de hombre sin carácter que a nadie satisface, porque si alguien llegase a sentirse satisfecho de mí, todo estaría perdido. (343)

The impossibility of creating a stable image of Boabdil calls into question the traditional historical view of him. The cultural texts that have presented the king of Granada as an incapable and egoistical ruler must be subject to careful scrutiny. The motivation for his behavior plays a vital part in challenging the dominant ideology when he comes into direct contact with forces that limit the growth of his subjectivity. Boabdil defies his assumed incapacity for power and control with burlesque examinations of his role and destiny in the received history:

Ciertamente no era un destino de héroe ni de salvador el que la historia me había reservado; tenía que prestarme a cumplir lo mejor posible el de hormiga calculadora, mal vista y despreciada, que procura, en el silencio y en la oscuridad, la perduración de su hormiguero. (348)

Gala's intentions in having Boabdil defy the traditional conception of subject connect with Hutcheon's reflections of parody, in that she sees it as a means to analyze and question the relationships between literature and history and the social, political and intellectual structures and official discourse of the past.²⁹ Although his construction appears restrained by elements beyond his rule, he knows what sacrifices must be made to help his people; even if they make him seem weak and powerless.

As the novel leads to the climactic defeat of the last Muslims in Moorish Spain, the king is less capable of resisting the external factors that impede his complete development as an autonomous character. Boabdil is still preoccupied with fully displaying the circumstances that shaped his subjective persona and affected his character as a political leader. His introspections now become more and more pessimistic, placing his figure in a limbo from which it cannot escape. His discourse that deals with intimate experiences and his unpleasant relationship with power and politics question the abstract ideas of center/periphery and the winners and losers' place in history. Overwhelmed by the restrictions imposed by a world that resists understanding, King Boabdil reflects and begins to comprehend the irreversibility of his destiny. His consideration shows two conflicting feelings; one that expresses what he accepts as definitive, his hopeless fate, and one that makes him see the ability to face adversity as the most important constituent of a human being:

No creo que fuese por la influencia de nadie, sino porque acepté poco a poco dentro de mí lo que se me imponía. Lo acepté como quien lleva la carga que tiene que llevar hasta el sitio que puede, sin preguntarse más; entre otras razones, porque es incapaz de librarse de ella, o quizá por esa

razón sola. Y comprendí por fin, sin que mi mente lo comprendiera, que luchar contra la imposibilidad no es vano ni inútil. (389)

His words express an unwillingness to conform. They clearly elaborate an ambiguous meaning that disrupts his assigned role as a lethargic king. The weight of his mission in life is directly related to the unavoidability of his function as leader. The obstacles raised against him leave little space for political independence, but his discourse finds in his complex confrontation with a fixed destiny, what he calls “imposibilidad”, a reason of being.

The official discourse denies the “Other” any possibility for self-realization by placing it in a disruptive textual location. As an act of social challenge and counter-discourse, the alternative voice examines the circumstances that affect the historical measures that shape society. In Boabdil’s case, such circumstances have obligated him to view himself as a displaced and marginalized character. It is now when the king of Granada recognizes the unpleasantness of holding unwanted power. His recapitulations determine the true magnitude of human beings in their most authentic dimension, the connection between self-preservation and acknowledgment. Another introspection presents the reader with what he foresees. Thinking about the siege of Granada, Boabdil reflects on the consequences that a possible surrender of the kingdom could have on his people. His deliberation deals with life and death, freedom and slavery. The narrator expresses with caution his future acts, establishing a separation between the results of his actions and his own depiction as monarch:

Se necesitaba un sutil y enorme don de la oportunidad para acertar hasta qué momento podrían mejorarse las condiciones de la capitulación, y a partir de qué momento serían destructivas. Y era justamente yo quien tenía

que tomar, en definitiva, esa resolución, insoportable en especial para unos hombros como los míos, no hechos a cargas semejantes. (425)

To this extent, King Boabdil gives evidence of a behavioral evolution that made him in the way he is. His writing ironically revises the relationship with his present, which had a destructive effect in the formation of his individuality. The phrase “para unos hombros como los míos” that paints him as someone unaccustomed to political and social power is a parody of manipulative and merciless leaders and their political authority. It contains a sacrifice that shows the magnitude of his cynical self. What he suggests is the contrary of its literal meaning: the lack of power and of representation as an independent subject does not appear because of his supposed “inferiority”. Rather, there are external circumstances and family relationships that have blocked his full development. The burlesque self-description thus carries him to an extreme melancholic sorrow.

Notes

Las Españas perdidas and El manuscrito carmesí

¹ Postmodern theories as well as postcolonial theories advocate the creation of a decentralizing mechanism needed in order to provoke a licit justification in the matter of demolishing the ancestral register of knowledge since it has only served to blind us. In fact, postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak believe that postcolonial criticism must become the political tool to criticize and question the notions of race, homogeneous power and political domination.

² In Moriscos en el pensamiento histórico: historiografía de un grupo marginado (1983), Bunes Ibarra believes that some representations of moros and moriscos have appeared as romantic and sympathetic, especially in literature, i. e., the romance of the Abencerraje and Don Quijote and in history with the work by Pedro de León (17), Modesto LaFuente (74) and Américo Castro (108). He also believes that the majority of the time this minority voice has been pejoratively used to mark the validity and uniqueness of the official position on power, especially in literature. Undermining the voice of the moros and moriscos revalues the voice of the “old Castilian.” Bunes Ibarra is referring to works by Fernando de Herrera, Fray Luis de León, Quevedo, Lope de Vega, Vicente Espinel (19-20), the texts of chroniclers of the war of Granada such as Jaime Bleda (31), Damían Fonseca (35), and historians such as Florencio Janer (61), and Sánchez Albónoz (110).

³ In Los Moriscos del reino de Granada (1991), Julio Caro Baroja presents the expulsion of the moros and moriscos as a national conflict. He explains how the expulsion vastly influenced the formation of the character of the Spaniards. For Caro Baroja, a large number of intellectuals in Spanish history have believed and some still believe that the measures undertaken by Philip II and Philip III were just, legal and the necessary and perfect solution of all the problems that Spain experienced at this time: “la medida fue sabia, de gran utilidad pública, o, cuando menos, irremediable.” 32.

⁴ In Narrativa Posmoderna Española: Crónica de un desengaño (1998) Ana María Spitzmesser presents the literary and social precepts that the novelists from the post-Franco’s era observed. She believes that they went through a period of recovering from the unfortunate national past. By doing so, Spanish writers looked for closure; that is, coming to terms with the Civil War and other atrocities suffered over the centuries. There is an intention to find a new narrative process that allows an active creative flow capable of reshaping the social and political life and create a new understanding about the inner composition of the Spanish society. 1-4.

⁵ As it is depicted in Historia de España. La crisis del siglo XVII bajos los últimos Austrias (1598-1700), the expulsion of the morisco population is not official until the royal edict of December 9, 1609. Philip III, under the influence of the Duke of Lerma, decreed their expulsion for both religious and political reasons. They began leaving Spain started few decades earlier due to the political and religious persecutions. There were two ways in which the moriscos were forced to abandon Spain. One way was from the seaports of Grao, Denia and Alicante for those who lived in Cataluña and Levante. The other way was from the seaports of Sevilla, through the Guadalquivir River, Málaga and Cartagena. The total for routes was 215,000 people. 141.

⁶ The war of las Alpujarras is considered the beginning of the end of the Spain's morisco population. Historians in favor or against the expulsion of the moriscos recognize the vital importance of the war in order to understand the critical situation experienced since many moriscos fled Spain seeking tolerance and protection.

⁷ In a recent interview with Antonio Lucas, Gala tells about the process of creating El manuscrito carmesí and the image of Boabdil in the Arab world. When in the process, one of the first things he did was to offer a business lunch with a several Arab ambassadors in Spain and told them that he was going to write about the last king of Granada. The reaction was unanimous since “les dije que iba a escribir sobre Boabdil. En ese momento se hizo un silencio en la mesa que daba miedo porque, para ellos, el último rey árabe de Granada era un traidor.” 1-2.

⁸ Postcolonial studies, with Edward Said and G. Spivak as the main representatives, proclaim and confirm the presence and relevance of non-traditional western values and thoughts and their impact in today's world. From the postcolonial perspective, Western cultural traditions are guilty of a repressive ethnocentrism. The models of literature and thought—Kant, Marx, Descartes, Nietzsche, Dante, Flaubert, etc.—have dominated the world marginalizing and excluding non-Western traditions, cultural expressions and ways of life. In this way, Villar Raso and Gala's narratives and their particular vision of History establish a link with postcolonial theories because both reject the conventional historiography for repressive and alienating. They confront the Imperialist “subject” since, as Hutcheon suggests, it has to be subjugated in order to be able to confirm and recuperate a negated and constantly rejected subjectivity.

⁹ José Ortega, “Cuatro crónicas noveladas de la destrucción de Granada,” La palabra y el hombre 91 (1994) 85.

¹⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, Shakespearean negotiations: the circulation of social energy in Renaissance England (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) 4-12.

¹¹ Celia Fernández, Historia y novela: poética de la novela histórica (Pamplona: Eunsia, 1998) 147.

¹² Vance Holloway, El posmodernismo y otras tendencias de la novela española (1967-1995) (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos) 54-5.

¹³ Many historians agree that there were two main reasons that motivate the Christian hate of the moriscos. The majority of Spain believed they were still practicing the Muslim religion and habits in private. Also and extremely important as well, this majority feared the morisco population was supporting and actually helping the Ottoman cause for an invasion of Spain. In simple terms, the Spaniards did not trust the Moriscos and doubted that they were loyal to Madrid.

¹⁴ Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction (New York: Routledge, 1988) 4-5.

¹⁵ Roland Barthes, Mythologies, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972) 110.

¹⁶ In November 25, 1491, the king of Granada Abú 'Abd Allah Muhammad (Boabdil) and the king and queen of Castile-Leon and Aragon, signed an international treaty; that is, a commutative political contract. By this contract, the Nasrid dynasty offered the sovereignty of the kingdom of Granada to the Catholic kings, which guaranteed to the inhabitants of the kingdom of Granada the right to respect their traditions and ways of living, the right to religious freedom, the right to own properties, the right to maintain the traditional administrative and judicial organization as well as their own legal system. Little by little and throughout the Sixteenth Century, the dominant order never enforced them all these rights and regulations. That is one of reasons that provoked frustration, disillusion among the Moriscos, and forced either to rise against the official power or to abandon their land.

¹⁷ Caro Baroja sees the existence of three historical reasons used to neglect the Moriscos. The last two enclose the significance of being disloyal and traitors, "1.º Que, de un lado se creía y se sabía que (los moriscos) estaban en relación con los infieles: mahometanos, turcos o berberiscos, si esto le era posible. 2.º Que, de otro, se creía que podían estar en relación con herejes y enemigos de la monarquía española." 15.

¹⁸ With the battle of Villalar and the execution of the three major figures of the rebels, Bravo, Padilla and Maldonado, The war of "Los Comuneros" ended. The primordial consequence of Carlos V's victory was a political of codependence between the nobles and the crown that implied a process of centralization and the beginning of an authoritarian monarchy.

¹⁹ Jean Plaidy, The Spanish Inquisition (New York: Barnes&Noble Books, 1994) 64.

²⁰ Luis Suárez Fernández, Historia de España: los Trastámara y los Reyes Católicos (Madrid: Editorial Gredos) 276.

²¹ Vladimir Svaton, "Lo épico de la novela y el problema de la novela histórica," Revista de literatura 101 (1989) 7-21.

- ²² J. H. Elliot, Imperial Spain: 1469-1716 (New York: ST Martin's Press, 1964) 36.
- ²³ Hayden White, Metahistoria: la imaginación histórica en la Europa del sigloXIX, 2a ed. (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001) 16.
- ²⁴ Antonio Lucas, "El alma de Boabdil era frágil como la escayola o el estuco", El Mundo Cultural 26 September 2001
<<http://www.elmundo.es/2001/09/26/cultura/1052327_imp.html>.
- ²⁵ Sander L. Gilman, Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of sexuality, race and madness (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985) 16-20.
- ²⁶ The fundamental players of the Invasion and establishment of the Islam in Spain were Tarik, Muza, and Abd-ar-Rahman the first. The general Tarik ben Ziyad was the first officer of the Muslim army to arrive in Spain April 711. He started the conquest with an army of 12, 000 men. Musa ben Nusayr, governor of Tangier, also entered in Spain with another 18,000 men and conquered Western Andalusia. Abd al-Rahman I was the first caliph of Cordoba and during his reign Spain was united under Islamic religion.
- ²⁷ Jo Labanyi, Myth and history in the contemporary Spanish novel (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 35-39.
- ²⁸ Luce Irigaray, "Commodities Among Themselves," This Sex Which is Not One (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) 193.
- ²⁹ Hutcheon, 125-140.

CONCLUSION

It is hardly surprising that in a world where ethnic, religious and social differences determine everyday life; our multicultural legacy is the most relevant variable for understanding what Spain is today. In the intellectual tradition of Western societies, scholars have analyzed and defined historical periods from a logocentric point of view and through the study of the rise and fall of ideas, common experiences, communities and civilizations. However, this perspective, as a system of thoughts, is flawed because it has ignored internal contradictions that challenge the exclusion of anything that opposes a monolithic conception of power.

In the introduction of La historia de España para jóvenes del siglo XXI (2003), the former ambassador and researcher José Antonio Vaca de Osma discusses the idiosyncratic history of Spain. In this recent book, he scrutinizes the different historical moments that have formed the nation's identity. His vision of the nation's past is marked by an exclusive principle: he stresses cultural homogeneity as the primary formative element of Spain's sense of self. From his standpoint, our history is the confirmation of the "supreme" doctrine of Christian civilization that still has an effect on its present inhabitants. He rejects the minorities that have contributed enormously to the configuration of the nation as if they were only historical imperfections. For instance, in relation to the longstanding Muslim presence in Spain, Vaca de Osma pejoratively describes the seven centuries of Al-Andalus as follows:

Un terrible elemento perturbador que nos alejó del común devenir continental, de los Pirineos hacia el norte, y nos obligó a siete siglos de Reconquista para recuperar la <<España perdida>>. Lo islámico nunca se integró en el sentimiento, en el espíritu de lo hispano, a pesar de algunas secuelas nada positivas en algunos aspectos caracteriales bien localizados. (15)

As recently as the Twenty First century, contemporary scholars such as Vaca de Osma still attempt to explain the formation of Spain through a single, prejudiced and intolerant perspective. On the other hand, I consider intrinsically pertinent the study of the cultural impact and the social relevance of the “*Nueva Novela Histórica*”, as exemplified by the works of Ortiz, Irisarri, Villar Raso and Gala. These authors now incorporate in their works an individual as well as a collective conception of history wherein traditions and long-established stereotypes suffer a profound revision. The intention of “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” is not to attempt to change the past; rather, it is a presentation of the events and the actors involved from the perspective of the marginalized elements of society. From my point of view, this particular narrative subgenre produces an understandable and necessary reconsideration of the canon, of the official historical discourse and of the conventional notion of society. It thus contributes to the recuperation and the validation of the nation’s pluralistic heritage, the essence of a diverse Spanish state.

Urraca, Toda, reina de Navarra, Las Españas perdidas and El manuscrito carmesí consequently defy the principles and considerations of those who have maintained and, in spite of everything, still want to maintain intact the now questionable supremacy of the traditional dominant system and of canonized historical and literary works. These four narratives bring back from oblivion the

tragic experiences and the forgotten figures of our past that have been long ignored by the establishment. Within these novels, there is polyphony and a multiplicity of styles and expressive modalities that disrupt society's logocentric perceptions of identity. Through the exposition of the crisis of national structures and customs, they critically examine who we are and redefine where we come from. These historical fictions thus offer the possibility to deconstruct received views and to re-evaluate both our past and our present.

The analysis of these four novels allows the articulation and the development of a method of questioning with which we can scrutinize the relevance of social cohabitation, gender interaction and individual and collective distinctiveness. Such an approach helps us to search for and debate possible explanations of our basic concerns as human beings and to give us a sense of connection to our silenced history. It is in this light that we can understand how Ortiz, Irisarri, Villar Raso and Gala have explored more than just the social nature of cultural communities; they have revisited the unique representations and contributions of novelized historical subjects conventionally viewed as secondary. These authors have communicated their particular vision of the world and of history within a stimulating literary atmosphere, capable of challenging its perception in linear terms. Each of the novels studied embraces a multicultural heritage and juxtaposes a central character, conventionally regarded as peripheral and judged negatively by the society.

Urraca, as well as Toda, reina de Navarra, correct the omissions that History has committed of female leaders as subjects, thus contesting patriarchal

truth. Both fictions represent complex women who suffer, love, hate, fight back and recognize the complete impact of both queens in Medieval Spain. In the case of Urraca, Ortiz critically examines the lack of accounts regarding her contributions in documented history. The narratives about the queen of Castile and the queen of Navarre explore the vital relation between history, the literary canon and female characters who struggle to find their identities and gain recognition as public figures, as women and as independent individuals. With the exposition of their fears, their desires and their expectations, they both appear as strong, yet sensitive human beings, able to control the narration and to establish a balance between private and public life.

The historical rereading of the past offered by Ortiz's and Irisarri's narratives impugns the accepted legitimacy of phallogentric societies. With the use of postmodernist and feminist theories that help provide novel interpretations of social practices related to politics, unconventional sexual behavior and the distribution of power, it is possible to understand how these writers are able to validate women's multiple personas and establish their claim to cultural participation. In the pages of Urraca and Toda, reina de Navarra, the main characters reassess the how and why of being considered minor participants in history, thereby gaining both a voice of their own and the possibility of challenging the dominant order. On the one hand, as in the case of Ortiz's narrative, the autobiographical chronicle of the queen of Castile and Leon, daughter of and successor to King Alfonso VI, explains through memory and the subject's self-realization how strong female character and self-sufficiency can be

used subjectively to re-examine history. The deprivation of freedom gives her the chance to reflect on and to present an alternative vision to the prejudiced view that canonical history has established for her and this legitimizes her own discourse for posterity. Urraca's will for authority, social control and self-representation help to uncover and to construct her image as a multifaceted individual that is parallel to the construction of modern women in Western societies of the late Twentieth Century.

On the other hand, Toda's thematic emergence in Irisarri's fiction confirms women's social and cultural roles as masters of their domain. The ancient queen of Navarre overcomes political obstacles through her characterization as a brilliant strategist, diplomat and feared warrior. Toda's presentation connects with today's contemporary views of women. As an autonomous and self-reliant subject, her discourse portrays independent female characters as emancipated subjects, thereby questioning traditional forms of knowledge and power.

Las Españas perdidas and El manuscrito carmesí correct the deligitimizing representations that History has assigned to historical religious minorities, which traditionally were perceived as essentially deficient and incapable of autonomy or independent opinions. Both fictions discuss how Moros and Moriscos have been portrayed as the traditional subordinate element of binary structures of identity and reveal how the re-enactment of the past from their perspective disrupts the cultural homogeneity imposed in Spain right after the fall of Granada in 1492. The narratives about the Morisco Diego/Yuder of Cuevas del Almanzora and the

last Muslim king of Granada emphasize the uniqueness of these characters and the failure of historiography and the literary canon to recognize the relevance of their people in the formation of Spanish culture. Given the alienation and the marginalization suffered by both characters and their personal existential questionings, they appear in each of these novels cynical at times, but most of the times as sensitive human beings who have a controlling voice in the narrative.

The literary revisiting of the past offered by Villar Raso's and Gala's novels condemns the dominant status of logocentric societies. Postmodernist, poststructuralist and postcolonial theories help us reassess the social constructions of peripheral identities as well as cultural legacies. They also make it possible to better understand the reasons why these writers confirm Moros and Moriscos as complex participants of our past, establishing the relevance of social, economic and religious differences as fundamental factors for the rejection they suffered. In the pages of Las Españas perdidas and El manuscrito carmesí, the characters' fictional autobiographies present an extremely tragic universe dominated by pure violence and intolerance. On the one hand, as is the case of Villar Raso's narrative, the Morisco Diego/Yuder, a forced spectator of a failing world dominated by ethnic repression, political anguish and coercion, represents through the memory of family experiences a dehumanized vision of Spain's past. The tribulations suffered give him the opportunity to reflect on hostility as a major obstacle to the full realization of human potential. His alternative vision of the prejudiced view that canonical history has established for his community pessimistically presents social agony and discrimination as the essential factors in

the construction of the idea of a homogeneous Spain. Diego/Yuder's existential questioning helps him to show freedom as the richest reward that any human being can ever obtain. His final reconsiderations of the official view of the past dispute the legitimacy of his community's expulsion from Spain. He posits that tolerance and pluralism are the indispensable tools for today's understanding of the world.

On the other hand, Boabdil's observations on the cultural importance of the Moorish legacy in Gala's fiction explain from his personal perspective the end of Al-Andalus, the fall of Granada, and the critical circumstances that surrounded his reign. Unable to overcome political obstacles needed to confirm his image as a feared warrior and brilliant monarch, Gala's representation of the powerless king of Granada implies that the established historical description of him can be considered derogatory due to external pressures and internal political conditions beyond his control: the same conditions that have negatively shaped his authority as a leader. Boabdil's first person narrative confronts his image by examining his political and social solitude and his presence in a chaotic and violent universe. As a king without the opportunity to fully exercise power, his discourse attempts to reach a comfort-zone in which he can fill the gap deliberately left vacant by the establishment.

In the same way that Catalan, Basque and Galician cultures are officially recognized as integral parts of the ethnic and linguistic configuration of Spain, I believe that previously non-traditional elements of our cultural heritage must enjoy recognition that would allow contemporary Spanish society to understand

and finally accept its historical diversity. During the years that democracy has opened a window on our history through which social and political pressures can dictate neither the methodology nor the possible outcomes of scholarly endeavors, literature has become the voice for those alienated by History. I am firmly convinced that the “*Nueva Novela Histórica*” has taken the first steps toward reaching such an objective. I propose that their legitimizing function is to advocate for a plural configuration of society in which the true magnitude of human beings can appear in its most authentic dimension. We have the opportunity to observe how the novels studied have vindicated the unrecognized individuals of our past. Utilizing a new approach to contextualize and recount the tragic events of the nation, these fictions have contested the idea of an exclusive and hegemonic historical truth. They have offered an image of The “Other” Spain, the ignored and silenced Spain that has waited close to 500 years to be heard. The works of Ortiz, Irisarri, Villar Raso and Gala are intellectual vehicles that undertake to rewrite history in answer to previously intolerant and one-dimensional accounts of the past. Through personal stories and the exposition of the uniqueness of daily experiences these writers palliate the absence of women and the attributed insignificance of minority groups in historiography and literature. They allow the narrators of Urraca and Toda, reina de Navarra, Las Españas perdidas and El Manuscrito carmesí to challenge the standing of the main characters in society, history and culture. I believe that Urraca’s, Toda’s, Diego/Yuder’s and Boabdil’s stories are models that help the reader to understand our past in order to search for a better future.

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